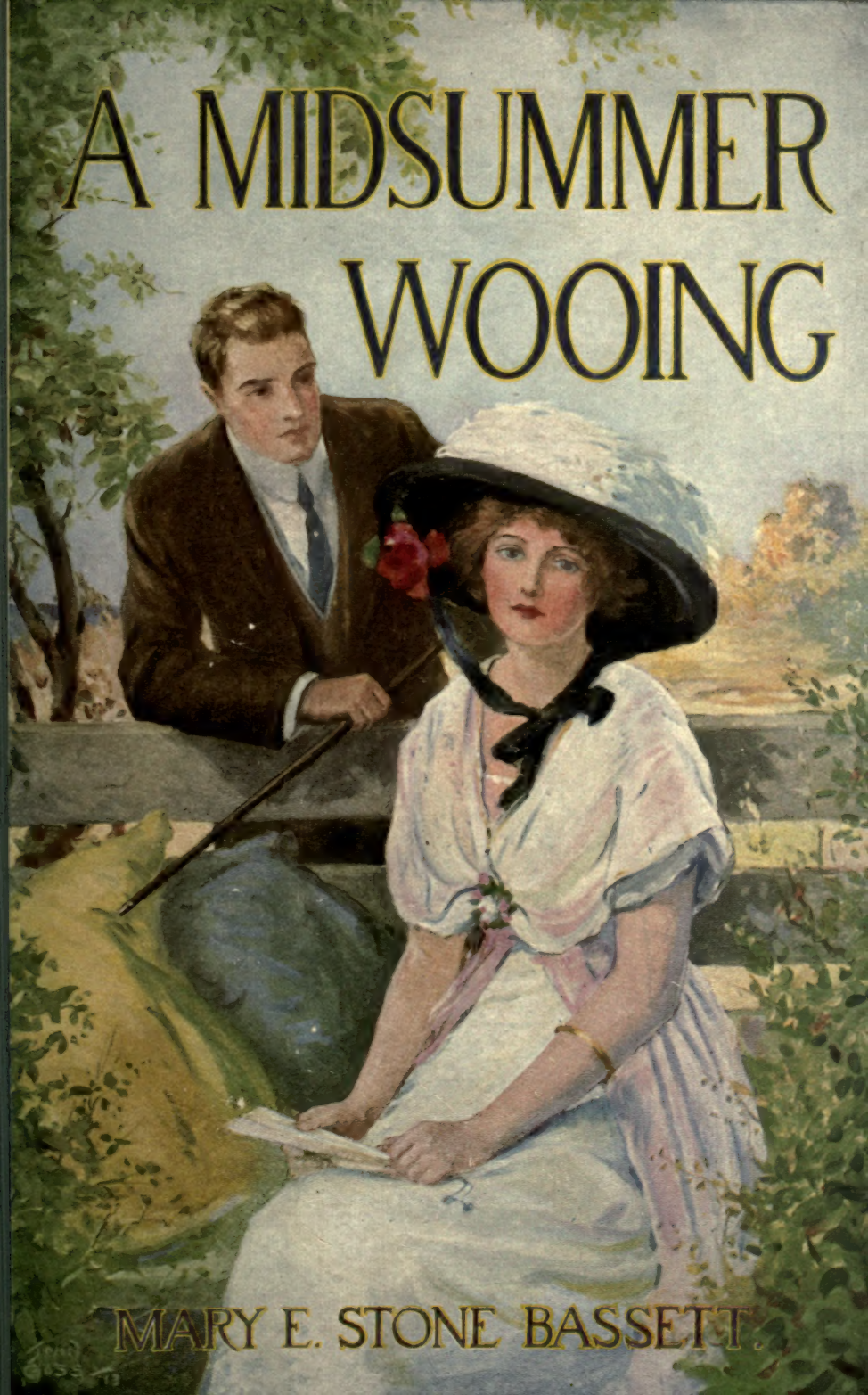
A MIDSUMMER WOOING



MARY E. STONE BASSETT

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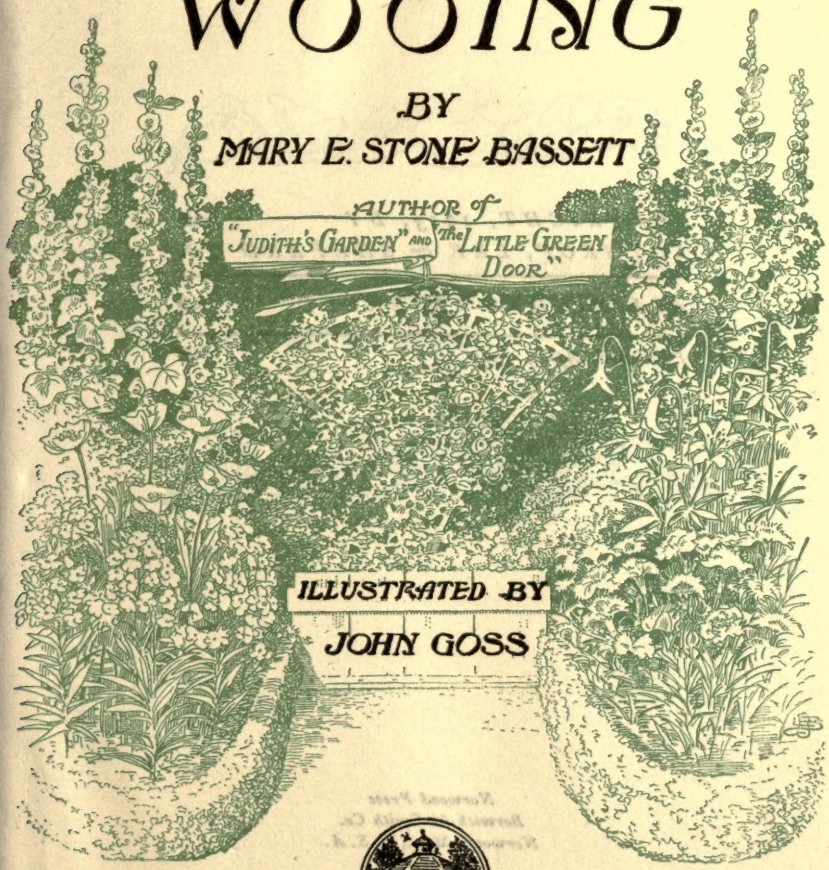
I don't see how one can be without a garden and morning glories

A MIDSUMMER WOOING

BY

MARY E. STONE BASSETT

AUTHOR OF "JUDITH'S GARDEN" AND "THE LITTLE GREEN DOOR"



ILLUSTRATED BY

JOHN GOSS

BOSTON
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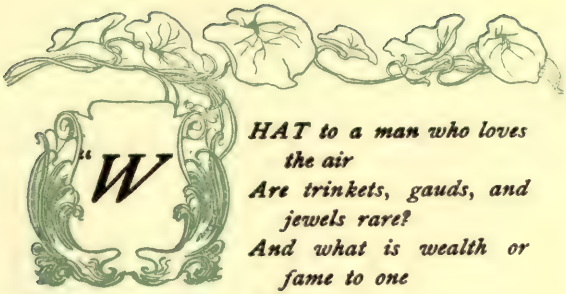
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"A garden is a beautiful book writ by the finger of God: Every flower and every leaf is a letter."

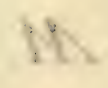


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"A garden is a beautiful book written by the finger of God: Every flower and every leaf is a letter."



"WHAT to a man who loves the air
Are trinkets, gauds, and jewels rare?
And what is wealth or fame to one
Who is a brother to the sun —
Who drinks the wine that morning spills
Upon the heaven-kissing hills,
And sees a ray of hope afar
In every glimmer of a star?"



INTRODUCTION

OF course I do not expect the person who dislikes gardens—should there be such a person in the world — to read this tale. Being a plant-loving, seed-sowing woman, I have glorified my garden, made it a spot of earth peculiarly dear to me. However, I have not forgotten romance. How could I with Priscilla Brown for a neighbour and a fine plant-loving young man for a visitor? Then the summer-house just built for two:

so cosy and so clambered over by scarlet creepers. Come and sit in it while I tell you the story.

THE AUTHOR.



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GET THYSELF A GARDEN AND HAPPINESS

I

MY first purchase this spring was a bottle of tonic for my cook. I imagined she looked pale; but Max said, "How can Rhoda look pale when she is as black as the ace of spades?"

"Well, then, she looks sort of fagged," I persisted.

I had some difficulty in administering the doses, for Rhoda is not fond of medicine; but I put it to her in this way: "If you fall sick I

shall starve, and that means a great deal to me."

After such a remark, I would pour out a big spoonful of the tonic and poor Rhoda would swallow it with a horrible grimace. "Jes' to please yer, Honey," she said.

You see, I love my cook, and if I do not take medicine myself I am willing to give it to others. Why should I take medicine? When I need a tonic I go out and listen to a bluebird singing, or to the merry "cheep" of a robin. No, indeed; when I want to take medicine and die, it shall be in the dead of winter and not in the glorious waking time of the year.

The other morning, as I was putting away the tonic bottle, Mrs. Webster, my next-door neighbour,

dropped in upon me. I love her, although she is a Christian Scientist and I am a gardener. She is the merriest soul alive; but to-day she took me to task for dosing Rhoda. She followed me into the greenhouse, lecturing all the time. I kept right on watering plants and searching for stray bugs. When she had apparently exhausted herself, I said:

"I don't take medicine, because I am one of Nature's children, and my old mother isn't fond of sick things. She wants her trees, her plants, and her animals to be strong and sleek, so I heed well her wise counsels. You don't take medicine, because you say you have discovered a higher law that, when obeyed, makes you strong and happy; but Rhoda is like neither

of us; she is a Methodist, and Methodists always take medicine."

"Sho!" she exclaimed.

I was bending over a pink azalea, a perfect bouquet of bloom.

"That plant didn't need medicine," she said, presently.

"It got a tonic," I persisted, — "bone-dust and other things. If you will not scold any more, I will give it to you;" and I proceeded to wrap the plant in stout paper.

She went off perfectly delighted with the azalea, but still strong in her faith.

At precisely twelve o'clock I gave Rhoda another spoonful of the tonic; then sat down to wait for my luncheon. We all need strength to cook.

When Max came home at night and told me he had made the first

payment on Tom Norton's place, and now it was really *ours* — for Mr. Norton couldn't possibly back out — I was so vaingloriously happy that I knocked over a vase I dislike, and broke it.

I really didn't mean to break that vase, it just happened so: yet I have always been very fortunate in getting rid of things I dislike. I remember once having a bonnet I hated. It cost me so much that I felt obliged to wear it; but one night I forgot and left it on a bench in the garden. A fearful storm arose, and next morning, when I went to look for my bonnet, why, you wouldn't have known it was a bonnet. I bore that loss with great resignation.

Again, I owned a cape (a gift from my Aunt Matilda). It was an

ugly shade of gray — so unbecoming! — but who can spurn a gift? Duty compelled me to wear it, but luck, as usual, was with me. The first time I took a boat ride that season, a gust of wind snatched the cape from my shoulders and blew it into the lake. I never recovered it. I wrote to Aunt Matilda of my loss, suggesting that if she were to send a ***red*** cape next time, the wind might not blow so hard.

There are few women who admit the truth. Even my best friend would have endured the vase in silence; but I, — well, it was such an ugly vase — yellow, with green stripes running round it. A missionary gave it to me, — he brought it from China. I had spent hours trying to make it fit into some obscure corner; but it wouldn't. It

always provoked me and set me against missionaries the moment I entered the room — "jarred on my nerves," I told Max.

He laughed and said it was a jar; yet he was quite put out when I accidentally broke it.

"Judith," he exclaimed, "you are the most wasteful creature alive. You've smashed a good vase."

"I don't care," I said serenely, "I have always disliked it. If more women would get rid of the things they dislike, they would be happier."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Max; "you might get to feeling that way towards me."

"I could not," I returned; "for you know, Max, I really admire you."

Max looked foolish, yet he likes

a little praise. I find I can rule him better this way than by frowns and scolding; and that reminds me of a story.

A little old Irishman was walking along our streets one day, smoking a clay pipe. At a corner he knocked the ashes from his pipe and boarded a passing car. There was one seat vacant — beside a finely dressed lady. Pat proceeded to take it and make himself as small as possible. He hid the vile-smelling pipe beneath his knotty fingers; but the lady was ill-tempered — her face was sour and gloomy. When a sudden jolt knocked the unfortunate Irishman against her, she said scornfully:

"If I were your wife, I would mix you a dose of poison!"

Pat looked at her and replied

meekly: "If ye *wor* me wife, mum, shure, I'd be willing to take it."

I am inclined to think some men feel like taking poison, much as I dislike to admit it.

Of course, what belongs to Max, I claim as mine, also. In this case I was doubly happy: for it seemed I was only coming into my own. Virtually, Tom Norton's place belonged to me last summer. Did I not make his rose-bushes bear my roses? I thought of the tulip and hyacinth beds and the Madonna lilies which I had so trustfully planted; the rose peonies upon which I had squandered my money. Had I been a selfish, miserly creature, I would not have spent this money to adorn another's garden. Had I listened to Max, where now would be this wealth of beauty that

will surely welcome me home? I have decided in my own mind, that a man is not competent to judge of a woman's flower garden.

"I suppose," said Max, after he had recovered from the loss of the vase, "you will be wanting to move out soon. Will you go in a large wagon with a double row of flower-pots on each side of you, or will you be wise and leave the products of your greenhouse behind?"

"Leave my plants to wither and die!" I exclaimed, indignantly. "No, indeed, but you need not ride in the wagon, dear. In truth, there wouldn't be room for you."

"I should hope not," said Max.

His suggestion about the wagon really pleased me. The very next day I went to see Mr. Banbury, a liveryman, and engaged of him

what he called his "democrat." One fine morning, about the last of April, we started forth.

I had the back of the box to the "democrat" well packed with flower-pots; and I put a lot in front, for Mr. Banbury said he could just as well hang his feet outside, so I let him. Then I set a big fuchsia on the seat between us and about the dashboard I fastened a tape and tied some of my orchid baskets to it. When I got in I had Mr. Banbury hand me a large hydrangea and two or three smaller pots: and, as he was so good-natured, I made Rhoda fetch a patent thing that Max hangs his coats on. This we put over Mr. Banbury's shoulders and fastened to it two large hanging baskets. As they hung down his back, he said they

wouldn't interfere with his driving and I knew we ought to take them, and could think of no other way.

When we started I was glad Max was not at home. He has such peculiar notions about appearances; but, as I had done nothing to be ashamed of, and people know I am fond of flowers, I held up my head and looked as unconcerned as if riding in a barouche.

I found Mr. Banbury a very pleasant companion. He said he was raised in the country; and got to telling me all about his father's place: how many cows they kept and how many horses. He said he used to work in a garden, but he hated it, for he always wanted to get into town and own a livery stable.

"And now that you have your

wish," I remarked, "of course you are very happy?"

"Oh, about so-so!" drawled Mr. Banbury; "'tain't all I expected; for you know as we git older things don't seem the same. I often wish I was back in that garden." He sighed.

I should have tried to comfort him, but just then we heard a noise, and looking back, I saw a fat woman standing in the middle of the road waving a mop at us. She had run out of a little house by the wayside.

Mr. Banbury said he didn't believe she wanted much and was for driving on, but I said no, we had better wait.

She came up with us at last — still waving her mop. She was very much out of breath.

"Shure, how mooch air thim flowers?" she gasped. "I'd loike a geranium; a red one, plaze."

Mr. Banbury was about to explain, but I nudged him. I was determined the poor soul should be pleased. I set the hydrangea on Mr. Banbury's knee and climbed down over the wheel.

"What one will you have?" I asked.

"I loikes that un," she replied, pointing to a vivid scarlet bloom.

I set it out. "Won't you take another?" I inquired.

"Shure I wu'd; but what may be the price o' 'em?"

"They're cheap to-day," I said; and set out four more pots.

She fumbled in the pocket of her calico gown and fished out a dime.

"Thot's all I hev," she said.

"Is it?" I replied, waving back the money. "Well, take them all and pay me some other time."

She went off carrying the precious geraniums, and we drove on: but presently I looked back and saw that she had forgotten her mop. It was lying in the middle of the road.

Mr. Banbury said she couldn't carry it on account of the geraniums and would come back for it; but I thought differently. "It is a good mop," I said, "and it might get run over. I shall carry it back to her," and in spite of his saying that the horses wouldn't stand, I set down my hydrangea again and crawled out over the wheel.

I was gone longer than I expected, for Mrs. Sullivan needed me to tell her just how to set out those geraniums, and then I gave her

some good advice about a flower bed she intended planting. I don't think Mr. Banbury liked it, for he looked cross. However, I paid no attention. I have learned that to pay no attention to people's ill-humour is a very good way not to fall angry yourself.

Presently we reached our gate, and there stood Pat, my gardener, ready to welcome me.

I wish I could tell you just how a little old Irishman's face looks when he is pleased. It was all "smily," and yet there was reserve in it — a sort of natural dignity which always marks a boundary line between Pat and me. He never can forget that I am "the boss," as he calls it.

"Here I am, Pat," I cried joyfully.

"I'm plazed to see ye, mum," he replied.

I handed him the hydrangea, then allowed him to help me down. Together, we fell to work unloading Mr. Banbury's wagon; and that person drove off — not ill pleased, I thought.

Here was a whole day in the country with no one to bother me. This sounds rather heartless; but you know there are times when one likes to be alone.

After telling Pat where to put our precious plants, in the house and about the piazza, I ran down the garden path to the spring. Sure enough, the daffodils I had planted were in bloom, waving their silken yellow petals in the brisk wind. Who could wish a lovelier sight than these beauties huddling about

that little crystal basin! They seemed like pure sunshine. The ferns were not all unfolded yet; but the few that were looked so lacy, so freshly green, making such a charming background, that I felt like saying to myself: "'Well done, thou good and faithful servant'; now enjoy thy work."

I sat down upon a bench — lost in admiration. Presently a bluebird happened near. I caught the bright gleam of his back as he darted past me and perched upon a young maple. He began to sing: a delicious, rollicking song, so full of good cheer and pleasant faith, that I felt like giving him an encore. In listening, I forgot all about time and all about trouble: — not that I have much trouble, unless, one can count on what is borrowed: and

why, I ask, should I borrow what I do not want and little need? If all women would remember this, they would enjoy themselves better. I could not help thinking as I sat there that life is a good thing, no matter how much some people decry it. I determined to live as long as possible, and the only thing that worried me was the leaving of life. I half wished I had helped to make the world, for I should have been just as kind to man as God is to nature. That probably old tree yonder, was it not putting forth a perfect miracle of fresh foliage — literally renewing itself? Why, then, should not a bald-headed man have a new growth of hair? This growing old, who likes it? Not I. The more I look into nature, the younger I feel. My spirit, at least,

shall renew itself each coming year.

From where I sat, I could see a little graveyard on the hillside, its white stones glistening in the sunshine. It was a quiet, peaceful spot, where, later on, wild roses would bloom and the long grass wave above the quiet sleepers. But it was not life: the glad pulsing life that rushes from the heart to redden the cheek: that makes the bluebird sparkle and glisten in the sun — filling his soft throat with joy. Oh, no, it was something I shrank from; yet knew I must one day embrace.

I turned my eyes quickly from the spot and rested them upon the daffodils. Had I not dug every hole in the black earth and buried the bulbs myself? They slept, to

arise in beauty. Perhaps, I thought, so is death; we shall arise clothed in beauty. I did not pick one of the flowers, because they looked so glad to be living.

Now put yourself in my place this gay spring morning. Supposing that there was nothing in the world that you so delighted in as a garden? That you dreamed of a garden and talked of a garden, until it was your one hobby to mount and ride upon all occasions. Then, supposing a fairy prince should give you a great garden, to do with just as you pleased? I imagine you would feel rather "set up," as the English have it.

Now Max is my fairy prince, and Tom Norton's garden is mine. I can do as I like in it; dig and plant to my heart's content. Poor Max

does not know a hyacinth from a larkspur and little cares which is which; but he delights in my happiness, and the garden, though not a paradise to him, is still the spot where his sole desire dwells — *myself*.

I was not thinking of him when he drove out for me that night. In truth, he hunted around a good bit before he found me. I was over in the south swamp looking at a bed of muck which Pat thought would make "foine dirt": and I wanted some of it for an old-fashioned garden.

Max had to wait an hour or more before I appeared. He was quite vexed.

"Judith," he exclaimed, "you've been traipsing around again. I have hunted and waited for you until I

have lost all patience. Where have you been?"

"Why, over in the south swamp, dear; and, Max, I saw a phoebe. The black-headed darling was in the lowest branch of a big basswood — calling in the sweetest way. I hunted around for his mate, but I imagine she has not yet come north; then I discovered a whole colony of hepaticas, as blue as heaven! and after that, — the sunset was incomparable."

"And you watched it as long as you dared?" said Max.

"Just as long as I dared, dear," I replied, "but now I am ready to go home."

"I should hope so," he said, dryly.

I love my husband, but I wish, oh, how I wish he did take a little

more interest in gardens. I talked to him about our garden all the way home; and I really hoped he would say: "Judith, I will double your allowance so that you may buy all the seeds and plants you desire." He said nothing of the sort; this is what he did say:

"Judith, I want to give you fair warning; if you spend all your allowance for seeds and plants as you did last summer, you will have to go without things."

I made no reply; for just then I was mentally calculating how many plants, how many nasturtiums, sweet-pea seeds and other things I could get out of a month's allowance.

I believe he thought I felt hurt, for he took my hand and peered under my broad-brimmed hat.

"What's the matter, little Judith Greenslip?" he inquired.

"Matter enough," I said brusquely: "I've got to do all my calculating over again. You've put me out."



I MOVE INTO MY EARTHLY PARADISE II

NEXT morning Mr. Banbury was on hand again, in spite of his ill-temper of the day before. As we were moving out — for good, this time — Rhoda accompanied me; bearing in her arms the gilded cage holding my precious Nancy. The remainder of the plants we bestowed in the box of the "democrat"; then I turned the key in the door of my winter abode and set out with a light heart for my Earthly Paradise.

Mr. Pegleg — my esteemed friend — came to bid me good-by. The poor old man looked sad, but brightened when I told him he must surely visit me for a whole month. I left him in charge of a large begonia, as I knew it would please him to think he was doing something for me.

Mr. Pegleg's body is long past eighty, but his spirit remains young and delightfully attractive. His religion astonishes me. He believes that the stars are other worlds in which spirits dwell. He also thinks our good things here will continue right on in the next life: say, if one loves a garden on this planet, why, a garden over there. I cling to this idea; for I would so much rather bear a trowel than a harp. He declares we can-

not afford to be cross or difficult here, lest it affect the characters we are building for eternity; and he has bade me always to meet resentment with mildness. I should try to oblige him, but for a very inconvenient temper. Isn't it strange one should have so much of a thing he does not want? I assure you Mr. Pegleg lives up to his religion.

I had found I could spare Mrs. Sullivan (the woman with the mop) a fern; so when we came opposite her house I climbed out and took it to her.

She was much pleased and would have me stay while she boiled me an egg.

I felt on pins and needles, knowing Mr. Banbury's uncertain temper, but what can one do when a

nice Irishwoman is bent on showing you a courtesy?

She said she would run to the barn and get the egg from under a hen.

I told her "No, no!" but she said "Yis, yis!" so I had to wait.

In the room was a very old woman in a white cap that frilled out from her face like a large sunflower. She was peacefully smoking a pipe.

"Pwhat's yer hurry?" she inquired.

"Mr. Banbury is waiting," I explained.

"Is it Ben Banbury ye mane, pwhat kapes a livery? Arrah, lave him wait! Shure, 'tis better plazed he'll be a-settin' than a-joggin'. Didn't I work for his faither's fambly years agone! A lazier b'y never

lived. Shure, he'd as soon tak' a dose o' pison an' die, as to hoe a hill o' beans. Arrah, lave him wait; — he'll charge it in the bill."

She looked dreadfully wise, and just then Mrs. Sullivan appeared with the egg.

Passing me, she whispered: "Me mither's ould, but she is awfu' cunning!"

I had respect for that ancient dame's judgment when Mr. Banbury presented his bill.

As it was — to get away — I told Mrs. Sullivan I liked my egg just turned, and in consequence was obliged to eat it nearly raw and to drink a "cup o' tay" that scalded all the way down.

When at last I appeared and climbed into the wagon, I really felt guilty; for Mr. Banbury's face

expressed his perturbed spirit. He struck the off horse a savage blow.

I felt a righteous indignation. "Mr. Banbury," I said, "because you are angry with me, there is no need that you should strike your horse. I have seen men before, who vented their temper in this way and I have small respect for them. A horse is one of God's children and a willing servant to man. He has a right to good treatment."

Mr. Banbury flecked the heads of the wayside weeds with his whip; I still looked him straight in the face, remembering Mr. Pegleg's religion, to be earnest but not severe.

"I s'pose I ought not ter," he said at last; "but I guess thar's pure cussedness in a man. You git him the least bit riled an' he's got to take it out on somethin'. I love

hosses as well as any one, but I sometimes lick 'em when they ain't done nothin'. Don't know what makes me, 'less it's pure cussedness."

I made no reply, for I saw Mr. Banbury's conscience was working and I didn't wish to interrupt it.

"I s'pose," he remarked at last, "you wouldn't hit a hoss under no circumstances?"

"I shouldn't hit one that had not offended me," I replied.

"S'pose not, s'pose not," he remarked; then he reached down into his pocket and drew up a tarnished silver tobacco-box, from which he extracted, as a comforting conclusion, a generous chew.

The rest of our journey was passed in silence save for Nancy, who gave several cheerful chirps

from her draped cage, as much as to say, "I'm still alive."

As Pat was not around, Mr. Banbury helped me to unload the plants. When about to leave, he said: "I tell you what I'll do, Mrs. Elliot, I'll give that hoss an extra feed of oats when I git home, that'll make it up to him; and I won't lick him agin when 'tain't necessary."

What more could the poor man say? I encouraged him, shook him by the hand and bade him a cheerful good-by.

When Rhoda and I ran into the house we threw open the doors and windows to let in the blessed country sunshine. We hung Nancy's cage in a sunny spot and Rhoda went to inspect the kitchen.

"'Clar' to goodness, Honey," she

exclaimed, "it do seem good to git whar yo' can snuff all de fresh air yo' like. I'se gwine straight to de gayrden to see if de mint-bed's sprung."



OUR VIOLET DINNER III

SOME people dislike April, but I see no reason for it. Does she not whisper to all the flowers and call back the birds? I know she frowns and frets; but the violets are not dismayed by these whims, nor am I. I can cheerfully endure a few clouds if I know the sun will soon peep through, and when the birds keep singing in the rain, why, pray, should I be sad?

I was glad Max was not at home the day it rained so hard. Had he

been, I could not have gone out. It really seemed providential that he started before the first downpour. It was his birthday, and Rhoda and I had planned a little dinner for him. I called it a violet dinner, for I intended going down to the swamp to pick some first violets that I had discovered growing on a marshy bank; but, as I told you, it began to pour and I was dismayed. What should I do? When I make a plan I am not at all inclined to give it up. I wandered through the house and looked out of every window, but it seemed just as rainy in one quarter as another; still, after an hour or so it slackened a little and I decided it was a very old-fashioned whim that keeps people in the house on account of rain.

I told Rhoda I was going up to my room, for I well know her horror of wet weather; and there I did go and read a book for a straight half-hour, just to convince my unpleasant Conscience that I was not telling a lie.

After I had the creature fairly subdued, I slipped into my waterproof and galoshes and hurried down the front stairs.

I fairly flew through the garden path, across the foot-bridge and into the grove. Here, I felt sure, Rhoda could not see me and run after me with an umbrella; so I paused a spell, for the long dim aisles enchanted me. Drip, drip, fell the rain down through the slight green leaves, and drip, drip, upon the unfolding ferns. What sweet scents were abroad! I sniffed

them with a hardy delight. I felt the soft pressure of growing things beneath my feet and saw the rain ghosts, mere wisps of mist, stealing through the trees.

"Rain, in the soft green budding wood,
Oh, I like to hear it well —
Drip, drip, drip.
All the thirsty leaves can tell
How refreshing is the day,
When the springtime rain has sway
In the shadowy, misty wood."

Why had I never before visited the woods in the rain? I took myself to task for this lost pleasure. Whenever I discover a new delight, I feel that I ought to have known it long ago. I could have enjoyed so much more of it, you see.

I knew I must not linger here, though I longed to. I set my face

resolutely toward an opening, promising my reluctant spirit, that the very next rainy day I would come out early and stay late. Soon I was trailing through a meadow path. I crossed several fields and came at length to a lane bordered on the left by a wood, which leads to the south swamp. I said to myself: "It is no farther to go through the woods than by the lane; why not take the woods? Those dim entrances look so deliciously misty — as if something more than usual lay beyond them: I think I will explore." I climbed the fence and crossed a roaring brook on a tottering log; dropped one of my galoshes in a mud-pat; recovered it, and was soon lost in the budding forest.

Here I forgot everything but the

good time I was having. I wandered at my own sweet will, down one aisle and then another. Suddenly — ahead of me — a little tongue of flame shot up between two tall trees and glowed like a blood-red signal. It beckoned me, and I followed it straight into a camp of gypsies.

Their canvas-covered wagon stood at one side, and I could see the feet of a recumbent man protruding from an end of it. He was asleep, but not so the rest of the band; they huddled around the camp-fire, cooking something in an iron kettle which smelled extremely appetizing. I drew nearer, although I knew I ought to run away. A black-haired gypsy girl caught sight of me and beckoned cordially.

"Come, pretty lady, and have your fortune told," croaked an elderly witch who was tending the kettle.

Now who does not long to lift the veil to the future — that mysterious, swaying, impenetrable veil which hides from us all the delightful things — or maybe, the sorrowful things — of life? I am but human. I felt in the steel purse which hung by a chatelaine to my belt, and clasped in my fingers a silver dollar. It was all I happened to have with me, and I had already mentally disposed of it in the line of garden seeds; but —

"Tell your fortune, pretty lady?" The witch wiped her hands on a tatter which hung from a bush and drew near me.

"How much?" I inquired.

"Only a half-dollar," she croaked cheerfully.

I took out my full dollar and crossed her palm with it. She conducted me to a fallen log, and bidding me be seated, crouched beside me and fixed her bold, beady eyes on my outstretched hand.

She looked so solemn, so owl-like, that I began to grow uneasy. Suppose she should tell me something was going to happen — Max to die or Rhoda to leave me? I half drew back.

"Easy, easy," she murmured: "I see, — I see flowers in your pathway. You love them and they are growing in a garden. Oh, my pretty lady, you feel at home in these green woods.

"Let me see," and she scanned my hand closer. "Some day you



"I see — I see flowers in your pathway"

will be rich — a relative will leave you a fortune — but you will not be happier for it. Why, how trustful you are, pretty lady! Your life is filled with sunshine. That's all."

"It is enough," I said, smiling; "but tell me, truly, do you discover a poorhouse anywhere in my fortune — say, at the end of it?"

"Nay, nay," she answered.

"Then take the dollar," I said boldly. "Such a fortune is worth it. Now that I feel free of the poorhouse I can afford to give."

I stayed a whole hour in that gypsy camp and ate some of the broth they cooked in the kettle. It did not taste as good as it smelled. As the rain had ceased I laid aside my waterproof. I was the poorer for doing it. A young gypsy maiden so admired my steel purse

that I gave it to her; and, as another looked wistfully at my belt, I also disposed of that. I felt thankful that I had on but my wedding band; for I was forced to convince them it would not come off my finger. They took my comb out of my hair, and tried it successively in their dishevelled locks. The last one fell heir to it, and I began to realize, if I had anything left I had better leave at once. I hastily donned my waterproof; and in spite of a most cordial invitation to stop longer with them, I hurried away.

One of them caught the tatter from the bush and waved me a loving farewell; then those cheerful robbers turned again to their campfire and woodsy meditations.

It was growing late and I fairly

ran to the south swamp. Kneeling on the soft turf, I picked violets for dear life, being careful, though, not to pull up their tender roots. When my basket was filled with the purple blooms I hurried home.

Rhoda met me half-way down the path to our kitchen garden. She looked fairly wild with fright.

"'Fore God, Honey, I'se so worried!" she cried. "I'se ramshacked dis hull place for yo'. De grocer boy tole me dey was gypsies in de woods yondah. I 'clar' to goodness, I feared dey done cotch mah chile. Whaffor yo' bin, Honey?"

"Just after violets, Rhoda. See what a lot I have picked."

"Yo' don' see no gypsies, Honey?"

"Why, Rhoda?"

"'Cause, they'd cotched yo', shuah!"

"See here, Rhoda," I said, "stop worrying. Am I not back safe and sound? While you are talking the ducks will burn. Gypsies, indeed!"

I went into the house and up to my room. Divesting myself of my wet garments, I donned a soft yellow gown that Max likes; then I went downstairs. I tied a yellow ribbon around the cat's neck and draped all the lamps with crinkly yellow-paper shades. Rhoda already had the table set with a snowy cloth and shining silver: it only remained for me to decorate it with the violets. I bunched some of them loosely into low glass bowls, and strewed the rest carelessly over the cloth. The soft yel-

low of the lamp-shades and the purple tints of my violets made a charming harmony. Then I lighted the fire in the great, cavernous fireplace. It leaped up cheerfully, filling the room with a warmth and glow, just as the spiteful rain, again falling, struck against the window-panes.

Presently I heard Max's steps, — he was home in season. I threw wide the door, and as the cheerful, glowing picture caught his eye, his dear face brightened. "This is your birthday, old gentleman," I said. "Give me your coat and hat. Now warm yourself beside our fire."

A little later Max had dressed and we were seated at dinner. On the hearth, cosily disposed, lay the cat — her yellow ribbon glowing in

the firelight. (I never consider a home picture quite complete without a cat.) Outside, the wind was howling just as I desired it should; — whining round the gables as if envious of our comfort within. The hardwood log glowed crimson, and the lamps gave forth a soft, serene light. Presently, the door opened and in walked Rhoda in her snowy turban and immaculate apron. Her black, shining face radiated satisfaction. I knew the dinner was a triumph. And was not the soup deliciously hot and spicy; the fish baked to a turn? What tartar sauce like Rhoda's! The ducks smothered in jelly; the aromatic tang of the mint sherbet; the crisp, cold salad served with tiny wafers dredged with cheese and a hint of red pepper! Then the famous Nes-

selrode pudding — made after her old missus's " recipy " in the South, so Rhoda claims; and, surely, it is famously good. The cake, bearing on its frosting the date of Max's birth; the long tray of lighted candles — I shall not tell how many — sat beside it; and lastly the coffee, clear as amber, and a tiny mould of cheese on a dainty plate beside a fat cracker. All so good that it made one a little lonesome to think of Heaven, where they do not eat at all.

I know of nothing more heartening in this world than a good dinner and a cheerful fire — with the one you love best beside you. It is then you feel at peace with all the world — and least in love with Heaven. My friend, Mr. Pegleg, believes that there are private fire-

sides in Heaven, and I certainly hope he is right. He is an optimist of a high order; but he calls himself a spiritualist, a very bad name for such a delightful belief.

After dinner you might have seen Max and me cosily nestling in one big chair, telling stories of our courting days. "Now, Max," I inquired, "if you can remember such an event, when do you think you first fell in love with me?"

"Why, the day, to be sure, that you called to me from behind the picket fence in your father's garden. You said to me: 'Say, boy, do you love butter?' and thrust out a handful of buttercups under my chin to catch their reflection. The hand wasn't overly clean, I remember."

"What did you think?"

"Oh, I stubbed my bare toe in the dust and said to myself: 'Golly, isn't she sweet!'"

"That couldn't really have been the time, Max."

"It was the beginning," he declared stoutly, "and the next time was when you graduated. Do you remember your essay, 'What the Sweet Pea said to the Rose?'"

"Now, Max!" I expostulated, for that essay was always a sore point with me. I tried to put my hand over his mouth.

"Hands off!" he cried: "when you had gotten through, I didn't know which I preferred, a sweet pea or a rose; but I was pretty sure you were a delicious mixture of the two. Didn't I dream of you that night, all mixed up with sweet peas

and roses! But tell me, when did you first fall in love with *me?*"

"Oh," I said, "I think it was the day you cuffed the grocer boy for beating his horse. He had been saucy to me; and you did such a complete job."

"I remember it well."

"And then," I continued, "when you went to the woods and fetched home a wheelbarrow of good black dirt for my pansy bed, I knew I loved you."

We both laughed. Delightful old tales to us. By and by we grew more serious. We counted up the years we had lived together and declared they had all been good, lovely years. Not a day or an hour that we wished to part with. Then we peered into the future — down that dim, misty path, which no man

knoweth — but our trust was in the good Father who surely gave us the birthright of happiness.

Before I slept that night, I sought the kitchen. Beside the snowy pine table sat Rhoda knitting. I love her, love her if she is black as ebony; and I said to her:

"Rhoda, I have come to thank you for the pleasure you have given us. The dinner was worthy of you. Every day of your life you add to our happiness. Now, good night: may your dreams be pleasant — your sleep sweet."

She looked at me with the love in her eyes that I imagined she used to give her dead husband and the lost pickaninnies; yet there was triumph in her mien:

"I'se learnt dat cookin' in one of de fust famblies in de Souf, Honey.

I 'clar' to goodness dar ain't none kin beat me! I'se dretful pleased that Mr. Max liked his dinnah; an' yo' jes' knows ole Rhoda 'ud crawl on her han's an' knees to please yo', Honey."

Then Max and I raked the ashes over the fire, put out the lights and the cat. Hand in hand we climbed the staircase — bound for sleep.



SUNSHINE AFTER RAIN IV

HOW glad one feels after a rainy day, to awake the next morning and find the sun shining as if the sky had never known a cloud! I can't tell you how joyous I felt as I hurried out of bed and donned my clothes. A bluebird was singing in a tree near my window and I called to him:

"You are no happier than I, little blue-back."

Then I hastened down to my

garden, for I knew the tulip bed would be all abloom. It is a gay combination — a bed of yellow, red, and white tulips with the sun in their silky cups.

I found Pat before me — leaning on his spade, admiring them.

"They do look grand," he commented. "Shure, it pays to kiver 'em well furninst the winter. By me sowl, but they're purty! In the ould kentry me uncle worked for a juke pwhat hed a craze for tulips. One year he planted tin thousand bulbs — think o' thot! Whin they bloomed in the spring, folks came for miles about to look at 'em. Such a soight! The juke wor gettin' ould thin, and he wor a-grievin' over the death of his little darter; but he tould me uncle, he believed God was good; else He niver cu'd

thought o' a thing so gay as a tulip."

"I know He is good, don't you, Pat?"

"Shure I thinks so, mum, whin I sees all the flowers a-bloomin' and the birds springin' about joyous loike and the sky so blue; but whin I thinks of purgatory and hell beyant — shure, I dunno, I dunno."

"Don't think about them, Pat. Come, this is our garden — a spot in the green earth to enjoy. There may be such places as you speak of, but I shall take good care not to inhabit them. See that path yonder? It leads to Arcady, or in other words, to the hyacinth bed. Come, tread it with me!"

I ran gayly down the path, and Pat, with that queer little grin about

his puckery mouth, followed me, as though in anticipation.

It seems that our hyacinth bed is in the right spot; a sheltered angle of the house just where every wanton, southern breeze can fan it. Its fragrance was borne to me on the balmy air long before I reached it. Early as it was, Pat had already tied up the heavy racemes of bloom that the storm had bowed the day before. He knew I should come to worship here; that faithful old man! As I looked at these early messengers of Spring — not stingy, winter-killed blooms that so often adorn a garden, but large perfect flowers in garb of deepest purple, palest pink and pearly white — I felt like one who receives a just reward, a large compensation. Hyacinth bulbs were dear last fall and

money was scarce; but did I think of this? No, I ordered the largest bulbs possible; paid for them at the sacrifice of a winter bonnet; planted them with faith in honest soil: and now, when my winter bonnet (had I bought it) would be worn out, here is this glorious bed of hyacinths upon which to feast my eyes — to glorify my soul. "I thank God," I cried aloud, "that I was wise!"

Pat, seeing me lost in rapture, shouldered his spade and walked away.

As Max would not rise for an hour yet, I had plenty of time to enjoy myself. I found a bench and drew it close to the hyacinth bed. I thought at first I should do nothing but admire the hyacinths. However, man proposes and God

disposes. I could not guess that this was to be a great morning for me, but so it proved.

It happened in this way. Two healthy, clean-breasted robins ran along the path before me, evidently absorbed in discussion. I could not help noticing them; they appeared so well groomed and so self-reliant. "Maybe," I thought, "here are a couple of aristocrats looking for a home. Well, there is that slender maple yonder."

As if in answer to my suggestion, they flew into that very tree. I saw them search diligently among the high branches, then perch side by side on a lower limb to talk it over.

Mr. Robin was somewhat decided in his conversation; for he chirped so loudly I knew there was a difference in opinion.

His wife listened to him with seeming deference; but at the end, took up the conversation, in a lower tone, to be sure, but with true feminine persistence. Her spouse shook his head and flapped his wings in derision; but I am happy to say she held on, and I do believe in the end had her own way; for she flew to the top of the tree — he following. Presently I saw them both start forth in search of building material.

Then an inspiration seized me. It was my first attempt at poetry, but what of that? Is there not always a first time? I really composed the following lines:

Ho! robin redbreast, I've been looking out for you;
I have it marked, my birdie, the day that you are due;

I see your red vest shining, I hear your cheery
call;
Aren't you glad, dear robin, 'tis spring in-
stead of fall?

Here's my same old maple with all its boughs
to rent;
It has been standing empty, dear robin, since
you went.
Come, let us strike a bargain: 'tis yours all
summer long,
If you'll only promise to pay the rent in song.

I ran to the house and met Max in the doorway. He spoke to me, but I put a finger to my lips in a mysterious fashion and sped upstairs.

It took me a few moments to find paper and pencil; and I was afraid that the feet in the meter would walk away with that poem before I could jot it down. However, I succeeded, and a prouder woman

never seated herself at a breakfast table.

I could scarcely eat for thinking of my high estate. A poet has always seemed to me an individual who resides in a steeple. I was really afraid Max would not inquire into the matter, so I hinted about some. I asked him if he believed poets were born so, or acquired the art.

"Born so," he said.

"Could any one suddenly develop into a poet?" I inquired.

"Well, hardly," he replied.

Then I asked him what he would do, should he discover a poet in his family?

He looked a little suspicious and said dryly, "I hope it will never come to that."

"But it has," I cried trium-

phantly — and handed him my poem.

He read it very seriously, then laid it down.

"Well?" I asked timidly.

"Gardener," he said, "I should advise you to go out and sow your pease and plant your cabbages; the day is fair."

And this is all the consolation I got from him.



A SUGGESTION FOR A SUMMER-HOUSE

V

WE had not been settled a week in our country home, when I received a letter from the young man who is interested in Priscilla Brown, a neighbour of mine.

He wrote to ask how the garden was getting along. He said he had thought a good deal about my garden and suggested that I should build a summer-house in it. He had seen just the right sort of summer-house last year; a simple af-

fair, only large enough for two people. It was fashioned out of poles set in a circle like an Indian's wigwam, and completely covered with scarlet runners. How pretty it would look in my garden! "Should he come on, pay me a little visit, and help to build it?"

At the end of the letter he inquired about Priscilla Brown and her violet house. He hoped she was well, and had gotten rich out of the violets. It was a very crafty letter, and did not in the least deceive me; but as I like the young man, I hastened to answer it.

I told him there was nothing in the world I should like better than just such a summer-house. He must come on without delay: for every hour hindered the scarlet runners from growing. I had al-

ready sent for the seed and Pat was cutting the poles. If he got here soon, by July the vines would completely cover the summer-house. It should be built just large enough for two people. They, no doubt, would be Max and myself.

That afternoon I went over to tell Priscilla Brown about this summer-house. I knew she would feel a real interest in it. She was not at home, having driven to town with her father. However, Belinda, their hired girl, had a tale of woe to pour into my ears. She told me that the violet house I had stocked for Priscilla Brown last fall, had given her, Belinda, the lumbago. "Taking that with my fits," said poor Belinda, "it was enough to set me crazy. God o' mercy, what good air vi'lets! I'd

ruther have one hen a-layin' eggs than a hull green-house full o' vi'-lets. Thar's more profit in it." Then she told me they had picked but ten violets all that winter; and according to her calculation, had burned at least twenty dollars' worth of coal to blossom those flowers.

I felt quite downcast at the news, but I reflected that had it not been for this same violet house, Mr. Warren, who was visiting Max at the time, might never have met Priscilla Brown. Where then would be the charming romance I saw hovering so delightfully in the near future? Fate, in her mysterious way, is often unkind, and I truly pitied Belinda for her long winter of profitless toil; still, I could not see that I was to blame.

I had done all for the best; so I smiled serenely and turned the conversation to the hen-house.

The hen-house, in which I also took an interest, was a success, Belinda said: the chickens had been real warm and comfortable and the hens had laid all winter. "I don't know what we'd 'a' done without the eggs," she whispered, "for with buyin' coal for them dum vi'lets and master's experimentin', we'd 'a' like to starved."

I told her I felt thankful something had turned out right, then I ate one of her hot ginger cookies (she was baking), and telling her to send her mistress to see me in the morning, I started for home.

The walk home was glorious. It was the first of May: the woods in their vernal tints were almost as

gorgeous as in autumn. The maples were all in pink and the oaks in gray. The young beech leaves shone so softly green that they seemed like filtered sunshine; while the chestnut leaves were dyed a ruddy brown. Among them, as a foil to all this loveliness, rose dark hemlocks, and here and there a silvery pine.

Robins, bluebirds, and phoebes were singing about, and as I came down to the water's edge to enter my boat, I caught sight of a loon. He dove under water the instant he saw me — just as if I carried a gun and were his deadly enemy. Is it not sad our dumb relations have so little trust in us?

I thought a good deal about the loon as I rowed across the lake. I wondered if his wife had come

north yet. It seems that the male and female loons do not travel together. He must come first and she follow. Birds have some strange notions. The bluebirds and the phoebes do the same thing — leave their wives behind and arrive north several days earlier. Who knows but somewhere on the route the males hold a great convention from which the females are debarred? When one gets to reading about birds and observing them, he finds they have their little idiosyncrasies just the same as the human family.

Thinking about birds, reminded me of a species of my own — Tom Norton's rooster. Pat had taken him home last fall in a basket for the winter. He had also taken the cat and returned her, but the rooster

was still in his possession. That bird was truly a trial to me — scratching up my flower beds and watching me every time I sowed a seed. I had half a mind to let Pat's spouse make him into a soup; but as usual, my troublesome conscience said, "nay." I could but remember how well he enjoyed living. What sleek, mottled gray feathers he had, and how knowing was the look in his sly eye. No, I could not allow him to be reduced to soup, merely to fatten an individual who was too fat already. He should return to his own domain and I would buy a hen to mate with him. The hen would lay an egg every morning — that would be thirty eggs a month; and eggs were, let me see, at least forty cents a dozen. Why! the sale of those

eggs would more than pay for the seeds they could both scratch up and leave me a tidy little surplus besides. I should be making money. The sooner that rooster returned and I bought a hen, the better for me. The woman to whom I gave the geraniums kept fowls; I decided that I would buy one of her.

By the time I had decided this weighty question, I was at home. Rhoda met me at the door. I could see she was excited, for her turban was awry. In one hand she held a letter.

"De postman lef' dis, Honey," she said. "He say it war directed to me."

"So it is, Rhoda; shall I read it to you?"

"Yes'm, Honey."

I opened the letter and read:

"'To Missus Rhoda Thompkins:

"'Dis is writ to let yo' know, dat yoah only sister, Polly Lutetia, is daid. She haf lef' one chile, Araminta Sprangleberry. What shall be done wif her?

"'Yours in de Lord,

"'Parson Chittenden.'"

The tears were rolling down poor Rhoda's face and I pitied her.

"Read dat agin," she said in a choked voice.

I repeated the sad news. The poor thing threw her apron over her head and fled to the kitchen.

I sat for a long time in the early dusk thinking how sad death is — what a robber in a world of love and happiness! No matter how fortunate or unfortunate one is, the

end is always the same. Then I thought of a little story Mr. Pegleg had told me.

He said: "When people die their spirits do not go far away. There is a place called the border-land where they wait for their earth-friends to come over. It is a beautiful place; and there are many camp-fires there. We all have some loved one waiting. When we come to die, these spirits return to earth, they hover around the bedside and cheer the departing one; and this is the reason so few people are afraid to die; they see friends beside them."

A comforting belief and worthy of Mr. Pegleg.

I told this little story to Rhoda, but she said:

"Sho, missus, dat's too good to

be true! When peoples die dey sleeps, and nebber wakes up 'til dey hayr Gabriel's trumpet a-tootin' in deir ears."



SWEET PRISCILLA VI

WHEN Priscilla Brown appeared next morning, I took a little time to admire her, for I dote on a pretty girl; and Priscilla is the prettiest girl I have ever known. It is very lucky that her mother was an actress and left her a wardrobe; for where now could one procure such fetching frocks as Priscilla wears?

To-day she was dressed in a violet broadcloth, with a short, tight-fitting velvet coat of a darker hue.

The coat was trimmed with bands of yellow lace and caught together at the breast by the palest turquoise I ever saw, set in an antique clasp of dull gold. Her hat was of ecru straw, its brim laden with Parma violets. Perhaps she wore this costume in honour of the violet house. It was not the sort of gown I should choose for a morning visit, but I felt thankful in my heart that Priscilla Brown was too poor to be conventional. These wonderful costumes were worn from necessity and not from choice.

When I had gotten over my first enthusiasm, I led her to the foot of the garden and pointed to a vacant spot.

"I am to have a new gardener," I said, "and he is to build me a summer-house yonder."

"Has Pat left you?" she inquired, innocently.

"No, indeed; but my new gardener is a self-installed one. He has asked the privilege of building this summer-house — just large enough to hold two people. I am to help him, and you are to come over and look on, to see that it is all right."

She began to blush, and I knew that the truth was out.

I gave her a little hug and dropped the subject; for, in love affairs, one cannot be too cautious. A match-maker had best look out.

We walked all through the garden and Priscilla was delighted with my daffodils and the tulip bed. She said she had never seen a gayer sight. I picked her a bunch of daffodils, for I had a fancy to see them

against her violet gown. They certainly enhanced the picture. When we came to the hyacinth bed she bent over it a long time, and I could see that her mind was uneasy.

"I fear," she said at last, "you will think it strange, when I tell you that my violets were not a success. Something seemed to ail them from the first."

"Do not worry, dear," I replied; "Belinda has told me."

She looked relieved.

"But did Belinda tell you all?" she asked presently; "did she say that we uprooted the plants and took down the benches? You see father is perfecting his aeroplane and he thought the orchid house would be just the place in which to set it up. Nothing else was large enough."

In fancy I drew a picture of Hetty Brown's orchid house sheltering this unstable steed. First, those strange growths of air and moisture; then the ungrateful violets; now, — well, was it not truly a castle of the air?

I smiled. "I dare say you were wise, dear, as long as the violets did not pay, to use the house for other purposes."

By this time we were at the gate, and I watched her walk away — holding the daffodils in one hand loosely against her violet gown; then I turned back to the house, put on my hat and sallied forth to buy a hen.

Mrs. Sullivan was delighted to see me. With great pride she showed me the geraniums all growing nicely and the fern green and

vigorous. When I told her my errand, she said I could have my pick of the hens.

We went out into the back yard. She took a pan of feed with her and called the fowls. They all came running on dreadfully energetic legs; and it was really touching to note how highly they regarded her.

There were all sorts and conditions of hens, and I was rather puzzled to know what one to take. At last I chose a very proud-looking one with a red topknot and black and white feathers. It was a small fowl, a trim, neat little mate for my tall Shanghai. How lordly and protecting he would look beside her. Mike, Mrs. Sullivan's youngest son, undertook to run her down for me. It was a hard task, but at last he triumphed and brought her

to me by her two legs — she squawking vigorously.

I promised the lad some money if he would carry her home for me, and pressing upon Mrs. Sullivan a dollar for my purchase, we set out.

It did seem as if that hen had an unusual voice — so loud and strident. I began to fear that if she did not cease squawking she would be afflicted with bronchitis. She kept it up all the way home and everybody we met smiled; while a horse driven by an old lady shied and nearly ran away with her. I could not help reflecting, afterward, that if the horse had run away and killed the old lady I might now be uncomfortably lodged in jail. I determined if I ever bought another hen to box her up before I moved her.

When I reached home I showed my purchase to Pat.

He looked doubtful and there was a queer little twinkle in his Irish eyes.

"Shure, ye'se knows best, missus," he said; "but begorra, why did ye buy a guinea hen to mate wid a Shanghai rooshter?"

Next day Pat returned that hen, bringing back a suitable mate with longer legs, a weaker voice and plainer feathers.



THE OLD-FASHIONED GARDEN

VII

I AWOKE early this morning, for I knew something very pleasant was going to happen. To-day, I should plant my old-fashioned garden.

The very thought of an old-fashioned garden puts one's blood in a tingle. As I went lightly down the stairs I half felt the invisible presence of one who loved flowers — my grandmother.

Here was I, her grandchild, desiring to have a garden just like

hers. Not leading, to be sure, from the front gate to the house; mine should lead from the back door down to the brook: still, there would be the same stiff box-bordered beds, and all the flowers she had loved growing in them.

Let me see; just as you opened the gate, to the right, was the garden heliotrope, sending forth such a delicious odour to welcome you, and next to it were the button roses, red and white, growing in chubby little clusters; then a bunch of variegated ribbon grass (some people call it gardener's garters) growing so stiff that it always reminded me of a milliner's stall. After that, the pale pink and the deep blue Canterbury bells and the clumps of lemon lilies. Just beyond grew tall blue larkspur and the

white and crimson glow of phlox; the bleeding-heart, that always bloomed so early in the spring; the mourning brides and the gay sweet-William (my grandmother's delight), then the single yellow roses that smelled like cinnamon; the big red peonies that flaunted in the sun and the stately blue and lavender flower-de-luce; the pinks and the misty candytuft; and so on up to the wide old porch where the climbing boursalt rose ended the procession.

Down on the other side were the double buttercups, the flowering almond, the spicy-scented southernwood, the bridal wreath, polyanthus, cockscomb, and prince's-feather, the myrtle and the balsam, love in a mist, rosemary and feverfew, wallflowers and mari-

golds; — clear down to the gate where stood the flowering currant bush, bearing its sweet-scented yellow clusters in summer and pungent black berries in fall.

Oh, I remember it well, my grandmother's garden, and this fresh spring morning I thought tenderly of this forebear, and wondered if in some other kindly world she were not a hardy, ruddy angel, bearing a trowel instead of a harp; working in some spiritual garden with the same zest, the same joyous satisfaction that she felt among her posies here? What more of a heaven could one ask? Still I thanked God there were gardens on earth to be planted, and I was not yet dead.

I found Pat before me, eager and anxious to get to work. What I

like about this little Irishman is his zest for doing things. When I have a plan on hand he always enters into it, and this is more than I can say of any one else in the world. For true sympathy, give me Pat.

"The top o' the mornin' to ye, missus," said he; "an' is it the ould-fashioned garden we'll be after makin' to-day?"

"It is, Pat," I said; "fetch the plants."

When Pat produced the huge basket of plants I had ordered, I looked over the list and found all complete. Those obliging florists had done their best to please me, but — well — I hoped the bill would not cost me my summer's wardrobe.

As Pat began to rake the long

beds and I to mark the places for the flowers, I really wished that I were a Christian Scientist. However, I remembered that one of their rules was always to put a good thought in place of a bad one; so I hastened to think the florists' bill would surely please me, instead of shock me.

I held that thought, firmly, while I plunged a root of box into a hole and packed the soil about it. It certainly helped me; for soon all my worries vanished. I forgot the bills and became a mere gardener, toiling in the good brown earth, with an eye for distances, a love for nature, and a soul set to an old-fashioned garden.

I had been at work an hour or more when I looked up and beheld a sombre-robed individual standing

beside me. He wore a long coat and a silk hat. I knew it was a minister. I had seen him before; and really, his visit seemed uncalled for. I wondered how he got in. Where were Rhoda's wits? Of all days in the world this was the one I least cared to pay attention to my soul.

"Good morning, gardener," he said in a rich bass voice.

I rose hastily and dusted the soil from my hands. I felt obliged to be polite. "Shall we go in?" I asked.

"Not I," he replied, "I have come to see your garden."

"Have you," I said, my resentment abating a trifle.

"That I have. There is nothing I so delight in as a garden. Was it not Bacon who said:

"'A garden is the purest of pleasure, it is the greatest refreshment to the spirit of man.' Tell me what you are doing."

"I am planting an old-fashioned garden, such as my grandmother used to love."

"Indeed," he said, "I remember a beautiful poem about such a garden."

"Can you not repeat it?" I asked.

"Perhaps; I think it was something like this:

"I know of a haunted garden where the old-time flowers grow.
There are hollyhocks and lilies in a long and stately row;
There are lilac-trees by the gateway, and roses white and red,
And the southernwood's spicy fragrance follows the careless tread;

A memory-haunted garden, out of life's busy way,
Where the spell of vanished summers lingers the livelong day.

"The hands that planted these flowers have mouldered back to dust,
But their hearts are true and steadfast, and they seem to hold in trust
The memories of the old time, and those whom men forget.
Perhaps for the lilac and lily the dead are living yet.
Those whom our eyes can not see may tend them still — who knows
Of the strange, sweet secrets hidden in the red heart of the rose?

"*Does* grandmother come to gather the pinks and the pansies still
From the grave which kind hands made her in the churchyard on the hill,
Does she know when the lilacs blossom that she planted long ago?
The question must go unanswered, but I fancy it may be so,

And so, from the dear old garden not a flower
I take away,
But leave them all to be gathered by the hands
that are dust to-day."

A little silence fell between us. Perhaps we were both thinking of the dead. I was the first to break the stillness.

"My grandmother dearly loved flowers," I said. "This garden is to her memory."

"That is a sweet thought," he returned. "Come, let me help you plant it."

"Oh, you couldn't," I said doubtfully; "you will soil the knees of your trousers."

"Isn't there a bit of rug I could kneel on?" he asked.

"Shure, there's a piece of ould carpet," said Pat.

"Get it for me, please," and five

minutes later, the Rev. Amos Simmons and myself were kneeling on opposite sides of the flower bed — he holding the plants steady while I piled the earth around them until it supported them.

Once, my straw sailor knocked against his silk hat and ruffled it some, but it did not seem to vex him. He began to talk in a way about flowers that opened my eyes with astonishment.

"How did you get in?" I asked at length.

"Why, I came through the fields yonder and across the little footbridge. I saw you in church last Sunday."

"Yes," I said, "I just happened there."

"Aren't you coming next Sunday?" he inquired.

"Perhaps," I answered vaguely.

"You must, for you will be interested. I am going to speak about the flowers."

"Then I will be there." I planted my trowel in the ground and looked at him. "I wonder," I said, "how you came to preach in that little country church?"

"Easy enough," he replied lightly. "I have had a charge in New York for some years, but this spring my health became rather shaky and I decided to take a rest. I have rented a small farm near here, and as the church needed a minister, why, I offered to fit in for a spell. That's all."

"How long shall you live on your farm?"

"Maybe a year, perhaps more. Anyway, until I feel well and

strong again. Pray, tell me the proper time to plant cabbages. Do you go by the moon?"

That we were going to be good friends, I soon decided. I told him all I knew about cabbages, and a few other things beside.

He stayed until the last plant was anchored in the earth, then he rose to go; but I detained him to show him the garden.

When at last he stood upon the foot-bridge, ready to cross the fields, I said to him:

"What do you call your garden?"

"The New Eden," he returned; "and may I ask what you call yours?"

"An Earthly Paradise," I replied. "I think," I said, smiling, "the Earthly Paradise can spare

some plants for the New Eden. Pat shall dig you a basketful. To-morrow, you must set them out, and the next day you must watch them, and the next day, and the next day, till they rise and blossom in their beauty."

"Thank you," he said, and went away.

I sat down on the bench beside the daffodils. I was rather tired and the soft wind fanned my hot face. I felt very happy, and presently a good wholesome hunger set me wondering what Rhoda would have for luncheon. I have such an excellent liver since I took to gardening. No longer do I mince my food like an overfed lady. The rich consider that they inherit the good things of this earth. Luxury awaits them, and Pride is their

handmaid, but oh, such torpid livers as they possess, and that means melancholy, loss of appetite and ill health! Thank God, I can work and eat, too! This good out-of-door life! What every tired woman needs is an Earthly Paradise or a New Eden.

The last I saw of the minister, he climbed the fence and disappeared in the shadowy woods beyond. Rhoda called me to lunch; and as I walked toward the house I fell to thinking: "Suppose, when Mr. Warren had built my summer-house and when it was all secluded 'neath the scarlet runners, he should come again. Some fine moonlight night, Priscilla Brown would visit me; and in that rustic stronghold, just big enough for two, Donald Warren would tell her that he loved

her. If Priscilla Brown said 'yes' to his proposal, — why, how handy that minister would come in to marry them!"



WE INSPECT MR. BROWN'S "FAILURES" VIII

"DO you mean to tell me, Rhoda, that your niece — Araminta Sprangleberry — has no home?"

"Dat's jes' what I means, Honey; she's clean orphaned. 'Clar' to goodness, dar ain't no one lef' her but me."

"How old is she, Rhoda?"

"Lemme see, Honey; she war two yeahs ole de wintah Jim, my ole man, got his leg bruk in de gum swamp; and she war five yeahs ole

de wintah we cum Norf. Five and two makes seben. Den I'se ben Norf seben yeahs; dat makes Araminty" — and Rhoda diligently counted on her fingers —

"Just fourteen," I said, to help her out.

"Law, Honey, Minty ain't dat ole, nohow. Hol' on, 'til I counts it ober:

"She war two yeahs ole de wintah Jim got de leg broke in de gum swamp; and de wintah I moved Norf she war five yeahs ole. Five an' two makes seben. Dat's sho'ly right."

"But, Rhoda," I expostulated, "why do you count that way? Why can't you say she was five years old the winter you moved North?"

"So she war, Honey; but den

she war two yeahs ole de wintah Jim — "

"Don't count those two years, — it isn't necessary. She was five years old the winter you moved North, and you have been North seven years. That makes Araminta just twelve years old. Isn't that right? How can you figure it any other way?"

"I dunno, Honey: I'se got so puzzled ober dem udder two yeahs, I don' sense whar dey's gwine to; but it do seem, Minty can't be no older 'an dat."

So it was all arranged that Araminta Sprangleberry should come North to be under the protection of her only relative, and to act in the capacity of waiting-maid to my humble self.

"She's jes' peart an' smart, mis-

sus," said Rhoda: "an' if she don' mind, youse can trollop her."

I did not feel at all sure that I wanted Araminta, but who would care for her if not Rhoda? and if Rhoda should leave me — the very thought made my flesh prick. No, a thousand times no! I would hail the coming of this handmaid; she should be welcome within my gates.

In the meantime, there were pleasanter things to contemplate. Stacked in a pile against the ice-house were slim birch poles that Pat had cut in the south swamp. They were to be used for my summer-house; and in two pudgy packets were the seeds of the scarlet runners.

Araminta was a problem of the future and as one should live only in the present, I soon forgot her

and watched anxiously for the slow-moving stage-coach to come over the hill.

I felt not a little vexed at the attitude Priscilla Brown had suddenly assumed. She refused my invitation to come over and watch us build the summer-house — saying, "father would need her at home."

In a way I understood her feelings. Did I not force Max to woo me most vigorously, before consenting?

"I am so sorry," I said, "for I thought it would interest you to see a summer-house built. I presume," I continued evasively, "Mr. Warren may wish to call on you in a friendly way. Will you object?"

"Oh, no," she answered, bright-

ening; "if you will only come too, Mrs. Elliot?"

"We will see," I returned, shortly. "It may take all of our time to build the summer-house; but if we have any to spare, you can look for us, dear."

Even such a slow vehicle as a stage-coach will appear at last. I welcomed Mr. Warren with a friendliness that must have cheered him. "Max could not stay at home to-day," I explained, "but he will drive out early this evening."

"I think," said Mr. Warren, in a low voice, "you have another guest in the stage-coach."

I peeped in, and there — with her head against a travelling-rug — fast asleep, I recognized the features of my Aunt Matilda.

"She was very tired, and dropped

off a mile back," explained Mr. Warren. "I hesitated to wake her."

I felt the tears well into my eyes. I love my aunt, but why, oh, why, had she chosen this inopportune time to visit me — just when I was arranging a delightful love affair for the sweetest girl I knew?

The stopping of the coach soon roused her. She opened her eyes and gazed at me. "Is it you, Judith, dear child?" she asked.

"Yes, Aunt Matilda. Let me assist you out. You did not send me word?"

"No, child; I wanted to see for myself just how you are situated. Call your servants and let them take my things."

Aunt Matilda is rich and she forgets that all her relatives share not

the same blessing; but as Pat was handy, I called to him.

My aunt bestirred herself, only to find that the long ride had cramped her considerably and brought on a touch of her old enemy — the gout. Mr. Warren and Pat were obliged to fairly carry her up the walk to the house.

I seated her in the easiest chair in our living-room; took off her wraps and the much-bespangled bonnet. That she was worn out I plainly saw, and my heart warmed toward her. Was it not pure love that prompted her to take such a tiresome journey?

"Dear Aunt Matilda," I said — and kissed her.

"Why, Judith," she exclaimed querulously, "how brown you are! And I believe there are freckles

coming on your nose. Are you forgetting that a woman's beauty is her greatest earthly possession?"

I did not reply, but formally introduced her to Mr. Warren; then I hurried to the kitchen to bid Rhoda make her a cup of tea.

"Rhoda," I said, "here is my aunt come to visit me, and just as I wanted to build the summer-house! Hurry up luncheon! Oh, how I wish there was something harmless that I could give Aunt Matilda to make her take a good nap this afternoon!"

"Dar's catnip tea, Honey," laughed Rhoda. "Dat's drefful soothin' to de narves, — makes one sleep like a babby."

"My poor aunt has the gout, Rhoda."

"My ole missus had dat same,

Honey; dat's a disease ob de quality. I uster mak' her catnip tea, an' she'd drap off dat easy like — "

"Perhaps I can persuade Aunt Matilda to try some, Rhoda. At any rate you can make it." Then I ran upstairs to the guest-chamber and put a little fire in the fireplace, for the day was cool. I had intended this room for Mr. Warren, but now he must take the north chamber.

The spare time before luncheon, I devoted to Aunt Matilda, as a dutiful niece should. Mr. Warren very considerately said he would take a little stroll. By and by a door opened and Rhoda appeared. A steaming fragrance was wafted in with her that I recognized as catnip.

She dropped a stiff little courtesy

to Aunt Matilda, then turned to me: "Missus," she said, "I'se found dat catnip."

"Aunt Matilda," I said, "Rhoda's mistress in the South used to have gout. She took catnip tea to ease it. Won't you try some?"

A gleam of interest shone in my aunt's eyes.

"Who was your mistress?" she inquired.

"Ob de quality, mum," replied Rhoda. "I wuz cook in one ob de fust famblies in de Souf."

"Was her gout very bad?"

"Passably, mum. It uster cum on powerful bad arter she ate ob de plum puddin' at Chris'mus time; but I 'clar' to goodness, catnip tea is dreffful good fur gout. It uster help my ole missus."

"I think I will try some," said

Aunt Matilda — waving away a proffered cup of tea. "Catnip is harmless."

Rhoda looked radiant. "I'll fix it up wid cream an' sugar, missus. 'Twill taste powerful fine."

In half an hour she was back again with one of my pet china bowls full of a creamy mixture that looked and smelled good.

Aunt Matilda liked it and drank the whole bowlful with a relish.

After luncheon she was in a passive state and said her foot no longer pained her. To my suggestion that she take a good long nap, she assented with avidity. Rhoda and I undressed her and helped her into the comfortable bed in the south chamber, where she could watch the firelight in the stone fireplace. I found on Max's desk a

novel, still uncut; and laying it beside her with my silver paper-cutter, I wished her a pleasant sleep.

"Yes, dear," she murmured drowsily, "and you must take a nap, yourself."

Take a nap! I flew down the stairs to Mr. Warren. "It is such a lovely afternoon," I said — looking up at the fleecy white clouds dotting the blue arch of heaven — "would you not like to take a row on the lake and pay Miss Brown a visit?"

"I would," he said eagerly; "but the summer-house? I must leave to-morrow. Business is more pressing than I thought it was going to be."

"We can show Pat how to set the poles," I said. "Pat is to be trusted."

Down we went to the foot of the garden, where, picking out a suitable spot, Mr. Warren illustrated to Pat just where each pole should be set.

"Hoo!" said Pat, smiling, "I knows pwhat ye want better than ye do yersilf, sir. In the juke's garden — where me uncle worked — thar wor two o' thim idintical tents. I remembers thim well. One had roses a-climbin' over it, an' the other mornin' glories; and each had a bit o' a bird house to top 'em. Jest you be aisy, sir, I'll fix things roight."

"My aunt is asleep," I told Mr. Warren; and I confessed that I had given her catnip tea.

"And why?" he asked.

"Because, because," I stammered, "I was afraid if she kept

me in you would go away without seeing Priscilla Brown."

He smiled and worked the oars a little faster. "I should hate to have done that," he said gently.

"I know it," I returned, "and Priscilla Brown is so shy —"

"And sweet," he added.

"Yes, sweet."

"I love her," he said, looking straight at me.

"I guessed it!" I exclaimed joyfully.

"Still, I fear," he remarked gloomily, "there is little hope for me. I have written to her all winter; but every letter she writes in reply is so shy and cold that I hesitate even to call her my friend."

"You must not hesitate," I said decidedly. "He who hesitates is lost."

"I am so glad," he remarked, presently, "that you are my friend, Mrs. Elliot."

"You may always count on me," I said, firmly, "but tell me, have you seen any new plants lately that are suitable for a garden?"

"Yes, indeed," he said, warming to the subject. "I have in mind a plant — I do not know its name, but it has fine yellow leaves and grows up like a little bush. It makes one think the sun is shining, no matter how gloomy the day."

"I must have it," I said decidedly. "Oh, Mr. Warren, do look up its name and write me at once."

By this time we had crossed the great shining lake and beached our boat close by a bed of reeds. The pointed lances rose so straight and vigorous, so beautifully green, that

it thrilled me just to gaze at them. I love the reeds that haunt the quiet coves. How they murmur when the little winds steal through them! Are they telling one another that it is good to stand with feet in the cool water under the great blue tent of heaven? The gauzy-winged dragon-fly hears them whisper and the red-winged blackbird answers with his merry whistle. The marsh wren gossips 'mid their greenness. Oh, there is always life and joy, brooding and love, 'mid these tall lances.

We fastened our boat and walked across the fields to the home of Priscilla Brown.

Belinda opened the door to a roomy old hall. She said, "Miss Priscilla will soon be down," and bade us be seated in the parlour.

I did not like the parlour. It had a carpet on the floor that looked like a misconstructed flower garden; and the furniture was black walnut covered with hideous yellow plush. I have heard since that Mr. Brown bought the house "ready furnished." Curious little stands were all about the room holding models under glass cases. Evidently, Mr. Brown was proud of his inventions. In a space between a door and the mantel, hung a large oil portrait of a beautiful woman. I could not keep my eyes from this picture. The tall, lithe figure in a pale blue satin gown with foam-like lace falling from the faultless shoulders; the large black hat with its mighty drooping plumes. I knew at once that this was Priscilla Brown's mother, the actress; but,

oh, how beautiful, how touching was the sweet girlish face that looked down at us! We no longer wondered where her daughter gained her beauty and grace of manner.

We were lost in admiration when Priscilla Brown came through the doorway: but we straightway forgot the portrait in gazing at this living embodiment of beauty.

There are women who remind one of flowers. Priscilla Brown was such on this day; she suggested a rose in its full beauty. Her gown was of a pale blue brocade with a soft blush rose printed upon it; while about her young shoulders gleamed the same pattern of old lace that adorned her mother's portrait. Her golden hair fell in soft waves about the fresh,

pure face and was fastened in a coil high on her head. In my very soul I blessed the gods that made her poor; that forced her, perhaps against her will, to wear those quaint, old-fashioned gowns, the belongings of a beautiful mother.

I gazed at her as much as seemed polite, and Mr. Warren, I think, rather overstepped the bounds. Her cheeks paled and reddened as she greeted us; but her natural dignity did not once desert her.

"You must excuse father," she said apologetically; "he has an idea and dares not forsake it. He prays that you will accept our hospitality."

It was rather strained, this sitting on the hard chairs, and I could think of nothing to say. Mr. Warren, also, appeared tongue-tied.

At length I pointed to the models: "Your father's work?" I inquired.

"Yes," she returned with animation. "Will you not examine them? Father calls them his failures; but I think they are wonderful."

We arose and gazed at the nearest model, a natural-looking ear, resting upon a red-plush cushion.

"This is an ear-trumpet," said Priscilla. "There is a wonderful little piece of mechanism behind the model, which enables the deaf to hear perfectly. The instrument is fastened over the real ear by those slender gold wires. Father had this model coloured in Paris so as to render it as natural as possible. He learned too late that it could not be patented; there was

something quite like it on the market."

"And this," she continued, pointing to a small machine, "is a winder. You stretch your skein here, then start up the machine with the little brass key; and presently your yarn is transferred into a neat ball on yonder spindle. Father was very sorry to learn that a Frenchman had thought of the same idea a little earlier."

We passed on. "That is a needle-setter," she said. "I can't just remember what happened to it; and here is a little electrical affair for brushing scalps — to make the hair grow."

"And did it succeed?" I asked, thinking of all the bald-headed men I knew.

She smiled. "Father thought it

would grow hair beautifully; but the man who tried it became prematurely bald." We sighed, and moved on.

"Here is an artificial eye," she resumed, pointing to an optical illusion upon a blue cushion. "Father was sure he could improve upon those already made. This has a self-acting, automatic spring, which moves the eyeball; but somehow father did not consider it a success. He made one for a horse that had lost an eye; but as the artificial eyeball could never be persuaded to move in the same direction with the real one, the effect was unpleasant."

Suddenly, we were interrupted by a low series of chuckles from an adjoining room — then a loud laugh and a frantic clapping of hands. Surely, some person was exercis-

ing for a lunatic asylum. I felt alarmed; but Priscilla's face brightened.

"It's father," she said; "oh, just listen! I do believe he has solved his idea!" She ran to the door and struck the panels. "Father, father," she cried joyously, "have you got it?"

"Go away, daughter," called an impatient voice. "Don't interrupt me; I all but had it."

After we had looked at the rest of Mr. Brown's "failures" we went out to the old orchid house and examined a queer-looking machine propped upon the benches. Here, I watched my opportunity to slip away. I told Priscilla that Rhoda wanted Belinda's recipe for cookies.

It took me a long time to get out

of Belinda just how to fashion those cookies. She was so fond of extolling the hens that I was obliged to get her ideas piecemeal, as it were. Then she wanted me to have a root of Balm of Gilead; and nothing would do but she must get a basket and spade and dig it up.

When at last, I re-entered the orchid house I was quite shamefaced; and the reproachful look in Priscilla's eyes was not assuring.

I showed her the Balm of Gilead and told her I had been examining the hens and was much pleased to find them all in good condition; then, as she still remained pale and distraught, I suddenly remembered Aunt Matilda. Surely, her nap would be ended.

"Oh, my poor aunt," I ex-

claimed; "how I have neglected her! We must go home this very minute."

Priscilla walked with us as far as the lake, and I gathered a few reeds while Mr. Warren bade her good-bye.

As we rowed homeward I could see that Mr. Warren was sad — very sad. At last I said, "Well?"

"It is no use," he remarked, despondently; "I can never, never win her. Her one idea is her father. She could not be persuaded to leave him."

"Oh, well," I said cheerfully, "he can't last forever."

Mr. Warren found that Pat had followed his idea perfectly, in regard to the summer-house; and I made that congenial, flower-loving man promise, that he would return

when the scarlet runners were all abloom with beauty, for I bade him remember that "Faint heart ne'er won fair ladye."



AN ARGUMENT BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE

IX

I SHALL not dwell upon the days my aunt spent with me. That they were tiresome, indoor days you may well imagine.

If the Lord had not mercifully sent rain, I should have been forced to seek my garden, and to have dragged Aunt Matilda with me. As it was, I rose early every morning, and in a soft veil of mist sowed seeds that I prayed might not be drowned out.

The second day my aunt was with me, she asked to inspect my wardrobe; and I, who hardly knew I had a wardrobe, was forced to drag out all my belongings and to pile them upon the bed before her highly disapproving eyes. Oh, why is my aunt so critical! Would she rather I were dressed in silks, pale and listless, or in neat ginghams, ruddy and strong? Could a sensible person prefer the former?

She tells me she fears that when I grow a little older Max will cease to love me; for then the slight beauty I can now boast of will be gone. I suppose she means that I shall be like a flower — run to garden seed.

I tell her that people who live out-of-doors do not grow old as quickly as those who live indoors.

As an illustration, I refer to the Indians.

"I should hate to look like an Indian," snaps my Aunt Matilda.

I feel like saying something; but suddenly I remember Mr. Pegleg's advice and remain meek. I am glad of it later on; for repenting is unpleasant business.

At last, the true meaning of my aunt's visit was revealed to me. She declared that she should personally take charge of my wardrobe and generously replenish it; but, in return, I must consent to spend a couple of months with her at the seaside. The change would do me good and she needed the society of her "only brother's only child."

When she spoke so kindly of my wardrobe, a burden slipped from

my shoulders. I began at once to picture delightful visits to florists, where I might spend my allowance without the hampering thoughts of bonnets and needed gowns; but now a cold feeling crept around my heart and spread over my whole body.

"Max is not well," I stammered.

"He says," remarked Aunt Matilda, "that he has not felt so well in years. He has given his consent to your going."

"Max said I could go?"

"To be sure, child."

I glanced hastily at the clock. It was after five; Max had already left town to drive home. If I hurried, I might meet him beyond the great hill, and there expostulate with him.

It was still raining, but I put on

my waterproof, and telling Aunt Matilda I must step out for a few minutes, I fairly ran down the path to the road.

My heart was swelling with bitterness. So Max had given his consent that I should leave my Earthly Paradise and journey forth with Aunt Matilda. It could never, never be!

When I climbed the hill, I discovered Max driving along at a lively pace.

I stepped into the road.

"Why, Judith!" he exclaimed, checking his horse.

Silently, I climbed in beside him.

"What's happened, Honey?" he asked tenderly.

"Oh," I said reproachfully, "you have given your consent for me to go away with Aunt Matilda!"

"What else could I do?" he said seriously; "she has claims upon you."

"Just when my roses will be out and my lilies budding," I continued; "just when I have invited Mr. Pegleg to spend a month with me. I'll die first!"

"But, Judith," he urged, "Aunt Matilda says you are one-sided. She thinks you are carrying this mania for gardening too far."

Max and I have been married some years, but never, never before have I felt so put out at him.

"She thinks," I said, bitterly, "because God made me to adore His works, before the works of man, that I am not a true woman. I wish she would endow an orphan asylum with her money; I don't want it."

"Just think what it will do, little Judith Greenslip," he said merrily. "You can build greenhouses galore and harvest roses by the bushel. You certainly do need that money, my gardener."

This attractive prospect banished my ill nature. "You are right," I said pleasantly; "and that reminds me, Max, — against our arbor-vitae hedge, I have a fancy to plant gladioluses. I shall need a bushel of bulbs; but, oh, what a sight they will make — what a glory of colour! I do hope Aunt Matilda will look after my wardrobe; for I want to order those bulbs to-morrow. It is a little late, but not too late."

"Then you intend to go with her?"

"Go with her? Not I. Max, you

must withdraw your consent. Can't you manage to fall sick?"

"Maybe. What shall I have — the measles or the mumps?"

I did not answer him, for suddenly I caught sight of fluttering wings. A brown thrasher had flown over our heads and alighted on a great elm-tree in the field beyond. I knew he was going to sing in spite of the misty rain.

"Oh, Max," I whispered eagerly, "it's a brown thrasher! Let's get out and listen to him."

"Pshaw," said Max; but I caught the hand that held the reins and stopped the horse. "I shall get out," I said decidedly: "for when one begins to study the birds she must press every opportunity. You can drive to the house and fix things up with Aunt Matilda."

Max looked a little vexed, but not much. He is growing used to my "idiosyncrasies," as he calls them: and I — my mind intent on melody — climbed the fence and stole cautiously through the field.

I was none too soon. The brown thrasher was already tuning his vocal organ. Just then the sun, struggling through ragged clouds, shone warmly down upon him, and he began to praise.

His notes — so liquid, so joyous, fell upon my ears like paeans to peace. Somewhere in nature there was a link between us: my spirit responded to his.

Nearer and nearer I crept, but he seemed not to heed me. He is not so shy as his brother, the wood-thrush. At last I could see his speckled breast, his swelling throat,

and note the look of ecstasy in his raised head.

I knew he was telling God that he appreciated all the greenness of this lovely earth; its wealth of flowers and its shining waters. "Oh, God," he chanted, "Thou art good to me — a bird; Thou hast given me a happy, trustful heart. I love Thee, I love Thee!"

Then my spirit began to praise. "Oh, God," I said, "I, too, thank Thee. I love Thy work. The sky is Thy glory and the green trees are Thy benediction. The shining water is Thy mirror of beauty, and the flowers are the kindly thoughts of Thy heart. I, too, have the merry and trustful spirit. Let me abide in Thy goodness, let me dwell in tents of peace."

The song ended, the brown

thrasher flew away, and I walked cheerfully home, knowing well in my heart that some good angel would intervene to keep me from going away with Aunt Matilda.



X

THE ARRIVAL OF MISS SPRANGLEBERRY

ARAMINTA SPRANGLEBERRY has arrived; and with her has come trouble of soul and vexation of spirit. I feel that she is a very imp of mischief.

Oh, what shall I do with her? — this queer little bundle of humanity in a green plaid skirt and a blue chambray waist. Her hair is braided into pigtails and her saucy eyes are bright as stars. When she laughs, her teeth gleam white, like

curdled milk. If you could have seen the little bob of a courtesy she made to me! Her Aunt Rhoda has faith in her; but I, who have faith in nearly every human being, doubt Araminta.

I was near the kitchen door yesterday, sowing some yellow poppy seeds, when I heard Rhoda laying down the law to the new arrival:

"Look hyar, yo' brack chick o' Satan! Whaffur yo' drap dat tumbler an' break it? Does yo' t'ink Miss Judith got money to spare fur sich foolishness? 'Deed, she ain't; she need all her money fur de plants an' de gayrden seeds; dey do tak powerful lot. I'se ain't gwine to hab yo' break things — hyar me? An' I jes' wants to 'spress on yo' dat you'se gwine to mind Miss Judith. If Miss Judith tells yo' fur

to stan' on yo' haid in de cornah, you'se gwine to do it, — hyar me? Eb'ry time she speaks you'se got to mind. I ain't gwine to hab no good-fur-nothin' niggah 'pertinent to my missus."

"'Clar' to goodness, Aunt Rhody, I ain't deef," replied Araminta; "I hyars yo'; but Miss Judith ain't gwine to tell me fur to stan' on my haid. Miss Judith ain't got no gov'-ment. I'se ain't 'fraid o' her!"

"You'se ain't!" said Rhoda in a large voice. "Yo' bettah be! If she ain't got no gov'ment, I hab. Jes' lemme hyar yo' sassy to her, — I'll trollop yo'!"

"Laws, Aunt Rhody, don' go for to 'spress yo'self so. I'se a good little niggah, I be."

"Dat's de way I likes to hyar yo' talk, Minty," said Rhoda, a tender

note in her voice. "Say, Honey, hab yo' got religion?"

"Yaas, I'se got it," said Miss Sprangleberry: "I'se bin on de mo'nahs' bench;" and she grabbed up a big platter and whirled a cloth deftly about it. Presently, she lifted up a fresh young voice:

"My wings am a-sproutin"
Like de angels ob de Lawd.
Twink a twink, twink, twink, twink!

She set down the platter, and lifting her short skirt, fell to dancing in such a gleeful manner that old Rhoda had to laugh and so did I.

Anyway, I thought, Araminta Sprangleberry is good for something. She is good for the blues.

Pretty soon I finished sowing the yellow poppies and went into the house for the seeds of scarlet

ones. Pat was digging me a large bed for these seeds at the left of my new summer-house, just where one could look through the opening and see the array of scarlet banners flaunting in every idle breeze. Oh, how I love a bed of gorgeous poppies! A sweet woman has said something like this about them:

"A poppy seed — it lies in the hand, a grain of dust; motionless, unlovely, dead. Yet think what it holds! The cool gray-green of upward-springing stalks and leaves; the compact calyx, studded with its hundreds of protecting hairs; and within, crumpled like a baby's hand, the exquisite shining silk of gorgeous petals! sunset rose, faint misty white, bold magnificent scarlet — all this in an atom of dust."

I poured the tiny, tiny seeds into

a shallow dish beside me — " God's miracles of glory," I thought — then sprinkled them on the moist black earth and blessed every seed, bidding it grow and bloom for *me.* I have a fashion of blessing things I love; if it does them no good, it surely can never harm them.

I was feeling in a particularly amiable and lively mood to-day. My aunt had gone and I was left behind. Max, the best of husbands, suddenly discovered that he could not spare me; and although Aunt Matilda argued with him for one straight hour, he held firm; for I was behind him, and every time I saw him weakening, I gave him a vigorous poke with a yard-stick which I had concealed in the folds of my gown.

The last day Aunt Matilda was

with me, she made me quite adore her; for she told me stories of my father's early life, and in a fit of loneliness kissed me again and again — calling me her "dear only brother's only child!" She asked me in tender tones what I most desired on earth? I, alas! so truthful, replied:

"An urn for my front yard."

I should have known better; still I hope she will not forget to send it.

That last day I literally dragged her through the garden — it was far too pleasant to stay in the house. Oh, how I did enjoy telling her about my flower beds; how this one would soon be in bloom and that one a little later. I showed her the spring and urged her to go as far as the grove with me; but just then her gouty foot took a

twinge and I had to call Pat to help me support her back to the house.

Some people think the rich enjoy themselves; but I feel sure they cannot. The law of compensation is so just, that indigestion or the gout nearly always sets in to even things up.

I felt sad when my Aunt Matilda kissed me good-bye; but not for long. I am of a peculiarly mercurial temperament. I suddenly remembered a basket of carnations that had come from the florist's and went to plant them. It is a good thing to have one's mind occupied when sad.

I was thinking of my aunt now, as I carefully smoothed the red poppy bed. I felt so happy to know that she was there and I was here.

Presently Pat appeared down the path.

I called to him.

"Comin', mum," he replied. "I'm after chasin' thot danged rooster an' hin out o' the marigoold bed."

"Has the hen laid an egg yet, Pat?" I inquired.

"Shure, an' she hasn't."

"She's got to begin pretty soon or she won't be profitable," I remarked. "I am going to sell the eggs that she lays to pay for the flower seeds that both those fowls scratch up."

Pat sighed. I know he does not approve of such a venture, but he is far too kind-hearted to oppose me.

He stood leaning on his spade, rather expectant, I thought. At

last he spoke: "Does ye see nothin' new about here, missus?"

"Where, Pat?" I asked.

"Shure, atop o' the summer-house."

I looked up and saw, set firmly upon the poles, a clever little residence with open doors.

"Oh, Pat," I cried, "it's for the birds! Did you make it?"

"I did then. It's loike the wee housins in the juke's yard whin me uncle had the place. I remimbers thim well."

I looked so pleased that Pat smiled.

"I thought ye'd loike it," he said; "but, be jabers, I'm whastin' me toime; an' the wheeds a-growin' thot fast — O Lord!"

He hastened away, and I sat down to dream of two merry new

tenants. It was rather late for the bluebirds; so perhaps — nay, very probably — the house would be rented to a pair of wrens. Then what a chattering there would be, and what singing at all hours of the day; sometimes, too, there would be scolding and naughty slapping of wings; but then I need not happen around when Jenny Wren and her mate were out of temper.

How complete my garden was growing. Surely, the Lord had prospered me. What more did I need? This day I had discovered thousands of tiny green buds starting on my rose-bushes. Soon, ah, soon June would be here; and oh, the glory of it! I hope I shall never die in June, and I don't think I shall; for when that month comes round I am so exhilarated, so filled

with a zest for living, that I forget all about heaven. I am perfectly satisfied with this dear old earth in June, — rosetime.



XI

A VISIT FROM MY IRISH NEIGHBOUR

PAT is the soul of good nature, but some beings would try the angels. Araminta is such an one.

My gardener came to me to-day, with fire in his eyes.

"Be jabers, mum," said he, "that little black divil is a caution! I've ketched her a-pullin' up me young redishes to see wor they big enuf to ate; thin, a-jabbin' o' 'em back in the sile. 'Tis riled I am at her, an' do ye blame me?"

I looked between the branches of my tallest Jacqueminot rose, for I was cutting a bloom.

"And how else could she find out?" I asked. "Araminta cannot see into the ground: still, it was very naughty in her, Pat. I presume I shall scold her."

"Begorra, she nades it!" and Pat walked away in high disgust.

I called for Araminta. She came and stood before me, digging one black toe into the ground. (She will run barefoot.)

"Araminta," I said as sternly as possible, "why did you pull up the radishes?"

"'Fore God, Miss Judith," she cried indignantly, "I'se ain't bin near dat old redish bed."

"Yes, you have, Araminta; Pat saw you."

"Sho! dat ole man needs specs. Dat was my Aunt Rhody."

"Araminta," I said, keeping my face turned from her, "do you know where liars go to?"

"Yes'm; dey's clean burned up, Parson Chittenden say."

"Aren't you afraid?"

"No, Miss Judith, 'cause I'se got religion; I'se one ob de elect; I ain't skeered at nothin'."

"Araminta," I said sternly, "I am going to tell your Aunt Rhoda."

The threat was timely. She threw her short cotton apron over her head and began to howl: "Oh, don't, Miss Judith, please don't! I'll be good, I'll 'fess! I was jes' gwine to look at one redish, when it pulled itself up by de roots, so dar! If you tell Aunt Rhody, mebbe she'll sen' me back Souf; an'

since I'se libed along o' yo' an' dese posies, I'd rather die than go back to dem niggah quarters."

"Do you love flowers, Araminta?" I asked, softening.

"I jes' dotes on 'em, Miss Judith. I wish I had some o' dem red roses to make a wreaf," and the apron was cautiously lowered.

I looked into her bright, black eyes and presently a fellow-feeling was established between us — a sort of invisible bridge of sympathy — for I recollected my own childish curiosity. How once upon a time (even then a lover of a garden), I had wandered through my father's watermelon-patch and with a sharp knife cut little green squares in the fruit just to see if the melons were ripe. They were not ripe, and a wicked spirit prompted me to turn

each green globe downward, exactly where the kind earth would hide its cruel wound. When my father discovered this he said, in a very dignified manner:

"Judith, you are young, but you are very deceitful. Your care in turning my melons to conceal your mischief has decided me. I should do very wrong if I failed to chastise you."

My distaste for that chastisement is still with me. I would be kinder to Araminta. I gave her the roses, and peace was between us. She ran off for twine to tie up the wreath, and I walked down the path toward the gate, for I perceived that some one was standing before it.

"Arrah, now, Mrs. Elliot," called a gay Irish voice, "but ye hev a foine garden! The flowers do look

grand. W'u'd ye moind if I walk a sphell among thim?"

"Come in," I said, hurrying to open the gate. "It will give me great satisfaction to show you my garden, Mrs. Sullivan. I am glad you want to see it."

"Thank ye kindly, Mrs. Elliot. 'Tis me mither, who is over eighty, but thot cunning! ses she, the fust day ye come to me house: 'That's a foine shlip o' a woman, and I bet she loikes flowers.'"

We walked up the path together, this bright morning in June, and I took Mrs. Sullivan straight to my rose garden. When the voluble Irishwoman's eyes rested upon that first outbreaking of bloom, shading from deepest red to purest white, she threw up her hands, exclaiming: "Thim's roses! O me God!"

"Aren't they glorious?" I cried, scarcely less elated, for I never approach my rose bed in June without a feeling that I have great cause for thanksgiving, "and say, Mrs. Sullivan, would you not like to have me root you some to make a hedge between your yard and your cornfield?"

"I'd be thot plazed, Mrs. Elliot, I don't know how to expriss mesilf."

"Now," I said briskly, "I shall cut some roses for your mother. Araminta," I called, "fetch me my shears and a basket."

For once that imp of mischief heard me, scurried away, and returned presently with the desired implements. As soon as her back was turned, Mrs. Sullivan said cautiously:

"In God's name, where did ye git that pace of humanity, Mrs. Elliot?"

"She came to me," I replied mournfully.

"I feel to pity ye," said my Irish friend.

I filled one-half of the basket with roses, then walked down the path to where candytuft and pinks were in bloom. I showed her my old-fashioned garden already beginning to look at home in its charming environments, showing here and there a sweet confusion of flowers.

"An' did yer grandmither die young?" inquired Mrs. Sullivan, showing much interest.

"Not so very old," I replied. "It must have been a terrible wrench to her to leave her garden. Her

last words were, ' Raise me up that I may look out upon my flowers.' "

A sympathetic tear glistened in my neighbour's eye and she lingered for a long time above the beds.

When she was ready to go the basket was running over with flowers; yet, you would not guess that the garden had lost one bloom. And this is the way, oh, gardener, — bless your flowers and give them freely; then, only, will they multiply and wax beautiful.

Down near the gate we came upon Pat straightening a border.

" Is it ye, Mr. Monahan? " said Mrs. Sullivan.

" 'Tis thot same. I hopes yer well, mum? "

" So, so, Mr. Monahan."

" An' how is yer mither? "

"Shure, she's ailin'; but her intellict is grand! But how is yer wife, Mr. Monahan?"

"Bridget is well, shure."

"Say now, Mr. Monahan, is she as great fur cookin' as iver?"

"Ivery bit, Mrs. Sullivan."

"Arrah, 'tis the foine soup she can make! Ah, Mr. Monahan, fortinit ye wor, to marry sich a cook."

Pat gave his spade a vicious little dig into the border.

"Good arternoon, Mrs. Sullivan," he said.

"The same to ye, Mr. Monahan."

When we reached the gate the good soul looked at me — the tears were in her eyes.

"God bless ye," she cried; "there's few as 'ud tak so mooch trouble for a poor woman loike me-

silf. Shure, we ain't in the same station at all, at all!"

"Indeed, we are," I returned cheerfully. "What am I but a poor country gardener?"



MR. SIMMONS AND I SOLVE A PROBLEM

XII

I HAD been out all the afternoon on the lake, when it occurred to me that I should like to see Priscilla Brown. There was a letter tucked away in my pocket which I thought might interest her. In it, a certain young man said that he was pining for the country. He wished me to measure the scarlet creepers and to write him just when I thought they would completely cover the summer-house. I had written back that

the scarlet creepers were now exactly two yards and three quarters high, and if they kept on growing at their present rate of speed, why, it could not be many weeks before that summer-house, built exclusively for two, would be ready for occupancy.

I thought of Priscilla, but I did not leave the boat. It was so pleasant on the lake, with just a little wind rippling round me, and overhead, the bluest sort of a sky piled full of snow-white clouds; then I was watching a kingfisher. If you have never watched a kingfisher you have missed a good deal in life. He is a handsome fellow, and wears, like Joseph in the Bible, a coat of many colours. I gazed from behind a little screen of rushes, and saw him sitting motionless upon

the dead branch of a fallen tree which overhangs the water; peering with bright, alert eyes into the brown shallows. I became almost as much interested in his fishing as he was; and felt like crying "Hurrah!" when suddenly he darted downward and came up with a fish in his stout beak. He was off to his mate; and perhaps, even now, they have a nest of young ones. I pictured to myself his home, built of fish bones, in some convenient hole or bank; the larger bones at the bottom and the smaller and daintier ones at the top; all of which he contrives to round and glue into a wonderful nest. Wonderful kingfisher!

The fishing over, I beached my boat and took the path across the fields. Presently I came to the low

wall which separates the meadow from the Browns' garden. Here, I discovered Mr. Brown arrayed in his long broadcloth coat and rusty silk hat, walking among his potato vines, pushing before him a curious-looking little machine which had what appeared to be an umbrella hoisted above it.

My curiosity was so great that I paused.

Mr. Brown paused also, and gravely lifted his hat.

"Good afternoon," I said timidly, for I had never before addressed him; and there was something in the gentle, dignified air of the man that abashed me. "I — I was wondering what you are doing?"

"Effacing potato bugs," he said, politely.

"With your patent bug-extermi-

nator!" I cried joyfully. "Oh, please tell me how you do it! I am so interested!"

"Certainly;" and he gallantly offered his hand to help me over the wall.

"It is a very simple contrivance," he remarked. "See, it is mounted on two wheels. Under that umbrella is secreted a strong chemical, the odour of which is fatal to bugs, yet harmless to plants. As I push the machine a valve opens and the chemical is released. The odour instantly overpowers the bugs and they drop into those pans outside the wheels, or else to the ground, — quite dead. A very simple, very simple affair! It is a fine day but I think we shall have rain. We need rain; my wheatfield is quite exhausted."

I was not so easily put off. "Mr. Brown," I said, earnestly, "I consider your bug-exterminator a wonderful machine. For two summers I have been deeply interested in the slaughter of bugs. It is a vital question with me. That simple affair, as you call it, ought to net you a fortune."

He smiled in a sweet, sad way that touched my heart. "You are young," he remarked, "and believe in things, but I am past seventy. When I was your age — well, I should be almost afraid, now, to meet that bright wraith, what castles I built, what plans I cherished! I saw a fortune in every simple thing. Now I am like a clam; I have two valves which I close securely over my enthusiasms. Still," — he paused — "I have one great

idea left — one that I dream of by day and by night. All my other inventions pale before it. Ah! — " he suddenly drew himself together — " pray excuse me: I wandered for a moment. I must continue with my work; the potato bug is an industrious, far-seeking insect and multiplies with amazing rapidity. I should find myself tuberless but for this little machine."

He replaced his rusty hat, and with a far-away look on his face, but still erect and stately, pursued his way down the long rows of green vines, calmly, serenely catching bugs.

I went to the house to find Priscilla.

I was just in time to aid her, for Belinda was in a fit.

We dashed cold water into the

poor thing's face and chafed her wrists and temples.

When she had revived, and Priscilla had gone to make her a cup of strong coffee, Belinda confided to me that she would never have had that fit — but for Mr. Brown.

It seems that very morning he had ordered her to kill all the fowls, having read in the newspaper that dressed poultry was fetching a high price in the market. He explained that he needed the money to perfect his air-ship.

"I can't do it," sobbed poor Belinda. "Them hens is our mainstay. Master's even mortgaged the place for that dum balloon. I do think he's gone clean crazy."

I agreed with her and felt really troubled over that indispensable flock of poultry.

"Did you tell Mr. Brown the facts?" I asked.

"I did," sniffed poor Belinda; "but he said the crops was all looking fine and we shouldn't need the hens. God o' mercy, what shall I do!"

She was growing so excited that I feared another fit. I did my best to calm her by telling her I was sure I could think of some way out of the difficulty; and what she must do, while I was thinking, was to close her eyes and rest.

The poor thing was glad enough to obey me; and I could see by her look of confidence that she expected great things from me.

I sat beside her for an hour, while Priscilla busied herself preparing the evening meal for her father. I did some deep thinking, but all to

no purpose. The hens were Mr. Brown's and he had a right to sell them, Belinda or no Belinda; and judging from my recent acquaintance with him, I felt pretty sure he would accomplish his end without regard to her wishes.

When she awoke, I whispered to her — for Priscilla was in the next room and the door between was wide open — that I must go home; but I would send her some word in the morning. In the meantime she was not to worry; everything would surely end all right.

It was an evening in which to rejoice. The sunset was superb. From my boat on the lake I watched it; and had it not been for those hens, I could have asked for nothing more.

That I had forgotten to show my

letter to Priscilla, proved that I was greatly troubled; but it mattered little, as I should certainly be obliged to go over in the morning to tell Belinda I could think of nothing to do. She must obey Mr. Brown — sell the hens, and if need be — starve. This painful duty done, I could read the letter to Priscilla. I was deep in this serious problem when the soft dip of oars behind me startled me. I turned and beheld my friend — the minister.

He looked so serene and happy that I envied him. To be sure, he was not troubled by a flock of hens.

"Good evening," he said pleasantly. "Are you enjoying the sunset?"

"Good evening," I returned; "I was trying to enjoy it."

"Trying?" He looked a little peculiar. "I supposed it was never an effort for you to appreciate nature, Mrs. Elliot."

"It is not," I said more cheerfully; "but you see, one cannot think of two things at the same time."

"Are you trying to do that?"

"I was, and succeeding poorly." I rocked the boat a little impatiently. "I wish," I said presently, "one need not worry about one's neighbour;" and then, as he looked so masterful, so helpful, with his clear-cut face and wealth of silvery hair outlined against the glowing sky, I took him into my confidence. I told him of the eccentricities of Mr. Brown, his altogether impractical ideas; the sweetness and trust of his daughter Priscilla, and the

distressing fear of the faithful old servant.

"He is so determined in his ways," I concluded, "that Belinda must surely part with the hens. The poor old thing fell into a fit over it. To pacify her, I agreed to think of some way out of the difficulty, but so far I have been absolutely unable to."

"One might offer to buy the hens?" he suggested.

"I have thought of that," I said dubiously, "but then Mr. Brown would insist upon delivering them: and what could I do with a whole flock of hens? Hens are so healthy and cheerful that I should never find the heart to kill one. They would multiply, and soon my Earthly Paradise would be a mere poultry farm."

"That would never do," he said, laughing.

"And poor Belinda," I continued, "would be no better off in the end; for Mr. Brown would squander the money. We must think of something better. Mr. Simmons," I said impressively, "you row around the lake in that direction and I will take this. Let us think deeply upon the subject. Perhaps, when we meet again, an inspiration will have come to one of us."

"A good idea," he cried; and picking up his oars, rowed briskly away, I following his example. When we met, Mr. Simmons still looked puzzled, but my face was bright with inspiration.

"I have it!" I exclaimed, delightedly; "I shall purchase one of Mr. Brown's patent bug-extermi-

nators. That will give him some ready money, and perhaps save the hens." Then I proceeded to explain to Mr. Simmons the merits of this wonderful invention.

"How have we lived without it?" he said gayly; "and I with a potato patch! I shall go to-morrow morning and purchase one myself from Mr. Brown."

"No," I said firmly, "I shall go over in the morning. Remember I am already acquainted with Mr. Brown."

"But," demurred the minister, "suppose he should have but one bug-exterminator. You would get ahead of me."

"That is your risk," I said, seriously; then we bade each other good-bye, for the sunset was fast fading and the dusky openings to

the woods were turning purple. I knew Max would be at home, waiting for me. So he was, and quite vexed; for Max seems to think his home-coming should always find me there to greet him. Just as if I had not business of my own once in a while!

That evening I spent a good deal of time calculating. I found it would take some close figuring to enable me to purchase a bug-exterminator. It is quite unwise to figure just at bedtime. My brain refused to quiet down; it even took upon itself the task of counting Belinda's hens; and reckoning up (if she were obliged to sell them) the money Mr. Brown would derive from the sacrifice. Certainly, if Belinda had so many hens and each hen weighed so many pounds and

each pound brought so many cents, why — right here I got up and bound a wet towel around my head. Even then I could not go to sleep. At midnight I woke Max.

"Max," I said, shaking him, "don't you remember two years ago last August, one day, when you wanted to pay the butter man, and did not have the money, I loaned you five dollars?"

"I suppose so; but go to sleep."

"Well, it has just occurred to me that you did not pay back that five dollars."

"Heavens, what a memory! Do let me sleep."

"I need the money," I said, solemnly.

"Oh, Judith," groaned Max, "please let me alone!"

But I was heartless. "Will you

pay me that money in the morning?"

"Yes, yes," he sighed, "if I can only have peace now."

I kissed him tenderly, then I turned on my pillow and threw away the wet towel. I felt I could sleep; for that extra five dollars would just enable me to pay what my conscience thought right to Mr. Brown for a patent bug-exterminator.

I PURCHASE A PATENT BUG-EXTERMINATOR XIII

I SELDOM stay late in bed, for I cannot bear to lose the freshness of the early day: the time when all the flowers look newly washed and every grass-blade sparkles with dew; but this morning I overslept. I imagine it was owing to my anxiety of the night. As I opened my eyes, I felt something light across them, obscuring the sight. I raised my hand and brushed aside the five-dollar bill Max had promised me. "What

a dear, thoughtful fellow he is!" I commented, as I hurriedly dressed and ran down the stairs. Max was already seated at the breakfast table.

"Did you find it?" he inquired.

"Find what?" I asked innocently.

"Why, the money I placed across your eyes to induce sweet dreams."

"Yes, dear boy," I said tenderly; "and I am so thankful that you are willing to pay your debts."

"I should have little peace, if I were not," grumbled Max.

I seated myself opposite him, not in the least ruffled, and we chatted merrily until he rose to go. Suddenly a question occurred to me:

"Max," I said, "at what season of the year does poultry bring the highest price?"

"Are you going to sacrifice your precious pair?" he asked.

"No, indeed; but do please answer my question."

"Well," pretending to look very wise, "along about Thanksgiving or Christmas, I fancy."

"I thought so," I said, relieved.

"Still, if you depend too closely upon my judgment," continued Max, "you may lose a cent or so a pound. Remember that, Judith."

"Don't joke," I said sternly; "the lives of at least a hundred fowls hang upon your judgment."

He raised his hands in mock horror. "So many!" he cried.

"It is time you went," I said. "Good-bye."

He left me and I hurried about my morning duties; for my mind was intent upon getting to Mr.

Brown's as soon as possible. However, I had promised to help Pat train the morning-glories; and this must be attended to before I could step into my boat and row away.

When I reached Mr. Brown's the first person I encountered was Priscilla. She was walking down the path to the lake.

I kissed her joyfully; then, as we sat side by side at the foot of an old tree, I read her my letter and watched the soft colour come and go in her delicate cheeks.

"What I admire most in Mr. Warren," I said, as I folded my letter, "is his high regard for plants. He would make an excellent florist."

She smiled but kept silent.

"Priscilla," I remarked presently, "I want to ask a real favour

of you. When Mr. Warren does come to visit me, won't you be a little nice to him, just to help me out? Country life is so dull for a young man, and I find he must be entertained."

"What can I do?" she inquired.

"You can go about with us," I said. "I want to take him to the top of Eagle's Cliff and to half a dozen other places."

"But father may not like —"

"He will," I interrupted, "when he knows that I shall chaperon you. Come now, promise."

She smiled and blushed deeply.

"Perhaps," she said.

I knew my case was won, for Priscilla always lives up to her word. "And now," I said, rising, "I have come to see your father on business."



"Country life is so dull for a young man, and I find he must be entertained"

"He is at work," she said doubtfully. "I fear — but of course he will see you."

"Where is he?" I asked.

"In the orchid house."

I left her, and made my way through the garden to the old glass house that had been used by a former tenant for orchids; there I found Mr. Brown deep in meditation beside his air-ship.

"Mr. Brown," I said, briskly, "I would like to purchase one of your bug-exterminators."

He eyed me hazily, and his mind appeared to be struggling back to the realities of life.

"I — I did not understand you," he said.

I repeated my desire.

His lank face brightened.

"Ah, let me see — have I one to

part with? Why, to be sure; please to follow me, Mrs. Elliot."

We went back through the garden to the barn; and from a little room which was originally intended to store harnesses, Mr. Brown produced three of his machines.

"I had these extra ones made," he said, "thinking the first model might give out. Pray take your choice, Mrs. Elliot."

Unable to see any difference, I chose the one nearest to me.

"Now," I said, "let me pay you, Mr. Brown."

"Don't speak of paying," he said, loftily. "The machine is of no consequence to me. You are very welcome to it."

I was nonplussed. He looked so stately, so every inch the old-school

gentleman, that I scarcely dared repeat my offer.

"I — I could not accept it without paying for it," I finally said, hesitatingly.

"Why not?" he asked. "I have no use for it."

"Because," I stammered; "oh, well, you see — it isn't my way; and it is such a wonderful machine; it will be so useful to me! When I think of the bugs I shall kill, why —"

Mr. Brown looked bored; I could see that he was anxious to return to his work.

"You are perfectly welcome to it," he repeated.

"No," I said, very firmly, and counted out twenty dollars. "You certainly must take as much as that, Mr. Brown."

His eyes brightened a trifle, and I felt he realized his need; but he said, gently pushing the money aside, "No, no!"

"Yes, yes," I pleaded; "I only fear it is not half enough;" and I laid the money on a little bench and prepared to move away.

"I am very sorry," he said pompously, "that you cannot accept a trifling gift from a neighbour, Mrs. Elliot; but it is not for me to contradict a lady. It shall be as you wish."

"My gardener will come after the machine," I said, greatly relieved.

"But here is the liquid," he continued, reaching for a large bottle from a shelf. "You must pour a little into this nozzle, which, you observe, unscrews;" and in a few

words he explained to me the workings of the machine.

I thanked him and together we passed out. As our way lay past the hen pasture, I remarked:

"You keep fowls, I see."

"Yes," replied Mr. Brown; "but I have ordered my servant to kill them. Poultry is fetching a high price in the market."

"Indeed," I said; "but don't you think it rather early in the season to dispose of poultry, Mr. Brown? They tell me that later on it will fetch a much higher price. I have a pair of fowls; but I shall not dispose of them yet awhile."

"You think it is best to wait?"

"Decidedly so; if one desires the highest market value."

"In that case," said Mr. Brown,

"I shall tell Belinda to hold the fowls. Good morning, Mrs. Elliot," and presently the door of the orchid house closed behind him. I could see through the glass that he had again resumed that reverent, self-absorbed attitude, lost in the contemplation of aerial flight.

But the hens were saved.

I went to tell Belinda. The poor creature wept for joy.

That evening on the lake, by appointment, I met Mr. Simmons. We were each the happy possessor of a bug-exterminator.

He related to me his experience with Mr. Brown. That gentleman had at first refused to see him. "I think they took me for an agent," said Mr. Simmons, laughingly; "but I persisted, and his beautiful daughter led me to an old green-

house at the end of the garden. Here I found Mr. Brown standing beside a queer-looking machine, which I found out later was a bona-fide air-ship. I was so interested in the thing that I came near forgetting my real errand. But at last, I recalled it and said: 'Mr. Brown, I hear that you have invented an insect-exterminator. The "New Eden" — my garden, I mean — has all sorts and conditions of bugs. I have come over in the hope that I may be so fortunate as to purchase a machine from you.'

"He looked a trifle bored. I could see that he had much rather continue our conversation concerning the air-ship; but I insisted and at last he led me to the barn. Here he produced two of the queerest-looking machines I ever saw.

"He told me I was welcome to my choice, and when I inquired the price, declared it was of no consequence. 'Just take one and go,' he said. I began to think our plan null and void; but I am excellent at arguing; so I convinced Mr. Brown that I should feel belittled in my own mind, if he refused to accept money for the scientific insect-exterminator.

"He yielded — very reluctantly — and for fear that he might repent, having learned that I was a minister, I hastily shouldered the machine and made off. To-morrow — "

"Oh, look," I broke in excitedly, "you have a bite, Mr. Simmons!" He had a line thrown from the boat and I could see the cork bobbing vigorously upon the water.

He quickly drew in and hauled up a fine bass. "Seven!" he said triumphantly.

I rowed back a little so as not to disturb any unwary fish; but though he cast his line repeatedly he was not again successful.

"I shall not try to catch more," he said, winding up the reel, "I have enough for breakfast."

"Did you see me in church last Sunday?" I inquired.

"Yes," he replied, "I recognized you."

"And I really liked the sermon," I continued. "It was very encouraging; quite unlike the most of sermons."

"Why?" he asked.

"Oh, because; after I had listened to it, I felt in just as good spirits as when I entered the

church. This is quite unusual for me."

"Explain yourself."

"Well, you see, ministers are so harsh. I have often been called a child of Satan, a worm, an empty vessel. I don't enjoy such names. I don't like to think God is angry with me, when I am so pleased with Him and the world He has put me in. He couldn't have fashioned a more contented creature than I am, so long as I have a garden and there is no one to cross me. Oh, I don't know why it is! Often, when I go to church, I feel low-spirited; but if I stay at home and go out in the lily patch I feel that God is right beside me. I think I must worship an outdoor God."

The minister laughed. "I used to call names," he said; "for I

thought people could only be made good by pointing out how awfully wicked they might be. 'Worm of the dust' was quite a choice phrase with me. Shall I tell you how I happened to change about?"

"Do," I said.

"I was very ill once, and people — friends, you know — dropped in to see me. Nearly all of them told me of some one who was worse off than myself. They related the most alarming symptoms possessed by this other man, and ended by congratulating me that I was not like him. I had always supposed that we could estimate our blessings only by comparison; but will you believe me, I found that I felt no better to learn that Mr. Jones' life hung by a hair; his alarming symptoms did not com-

fort me in the least or lessen the pain I had to bear. I was not more grateful; in truth, I was ungrateful. I began to wish the invalids would die or else the people would die who came to tell me about them; I did not much care which.

"But among my friends was one man who never mentioned an ailment. He would always tell me of some one who was so much better off than myself; of people who possessed rugged health. One day he dropped in and spent an hour dilating upon the good points of a young man who had never been ill in his life. After my friend had gone, my mind dwelt upon this very healthy young person. The more I thought about him, the better I felt; until, at last, it flashed upon me like a great truth: to think

of strength begets strength. I remembered the words of St. Paul: 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.'

"I arose from the sick bed a changed man. One day I said to my wife, 'Dearie, can you afford to be a little poorer?'

"She smiled and said, 'Yes, if *you* can;' and that settled it.

"Next Sunday I resigned my charge in a fashionable church.

"'I want to preach to "sinners,"' I told the officers of the church. 'Some one else can minister to these saints who rent their pews by the year.'

"Somehow, my ideas crept into the newspapers; and before two weeks were over, I had received three calls to churches that assured me that there was not a saint among them.

"I chose the poorest church. The first Sunday I preached, the house was crowded with 'sinners,' as they called themselves. The pews were free and there was no fixed salary to be paid the pastor — only voluntary contributions — so I felt myself a free man. I was no longer a hireling; I could say what I pleased. 'Sinners,' I said, 'there is hope for you; but if you expect me to tell you how to mend your sins you will be disappointed. Comparisons have become odious to me; I shall only tell you of the good things God has done for all

alike; the birthright of strength and happiness that He intends for every living soul.'

"Then I preached them a sermon of good cheer. When I had finished I remarked: 'Now, I shall not expect this crop of sinners to be present at the evening service; just stay away and let others come.' They obeyed me; and I looked that night upon a fresh crowd of unfamiliar faces.

"So it went on. I became a regular blessing-hunter. Everywhere I sought for good on this earth. How did I succeed? Why, some Sundays it seemed to me I couldn't get the good I had discovered into the whole church. I was so eager to tell about it, that I cut short the prayers. Do you know," and Mr. Simmons turned the boat a trifle to

the right, "there are no would-be sinners; there are no utterly hardened hearts. I don't believe there is a soul in this world that really wants to be bad. Poor things, they are only astray; they need to be encouraged, to be told of joy and love, to be led gently back to paths of peace."

"How did you address those sinners?" I inquired.

"As sons of God!"

"And you did not tell them the world was teeming with wickedness?"

"I told them it was running over with good, and I believe it is."

"Well," I said, "what happened next?"

"A revival," replied Mr. Simmons, "that astonished me."

"Hush! I hear a wood-thrush,"

I whispered. "He is just beginning to sing."

We rowed our boats nearer inland to listen. Have you ever heard the wood-thrush? Have you ever been out on a quiet lake and caught his first liquid notes? Oh, I hope you have for your own sake.

The departing sun had ploughed the water — turning up furrows of gold; the hills rose deeply purple against a daffodil sky and the wood opposite was vaguely blurred. It was time for evening song.

We sat in the chastened light and listened to that heavenly voice dropping its melody earthward.

When it ceased for a moment, I said: "Pythagoras has told us that the penalty to the soul of a man is to return to this earth in the form of a woman; but to a woman, *she*

shall return as a bird. I should like to be a wood-thrush."

Our songster flitted away. It was time to go home.

I rowed a space, then returned. "I have just thought of something else," I said. "It is Thoreau's tribute to the wood-thrush. He says, in his inimitable way:

"'Here is a bird in whose strain the story is told. Whenever a man hears it, he is young and nature is in her spring. Wherever he hears it, there is a new world and a new country, and the gates of heaven are not shut against him.'"

"Ah!" breathed the minister, "and Higginson says, 'Flutes and flageolets are art's poor effort to recall that softer sound.'"

"And was it not he," I asked, "who said of a bird's egg, 'It is as

if a pearl opened and an angel sang?'"

I could have kept on quoting to that minister; but the sun was quite gone and violet shadows were edging the lake, looking almost black among the tall rushes. So I said "Good night;" but repented and called back:

"Why did you give up preaching to sinners?"

"'Twas this way," he returned, his voice carrying over the water: "the voluntary contributions went so far ahead of my usual salary and I grew rich so fast, that I determined to give my soul a little growing spell; then my body was becoming fagged. When I am rested I shall return to my work with renewed vigor."

I called again:

"Mr. Simmons, when will you try the bug-exterminator?"

"To-morrow," he replied, "in my potato patch."



XIV

MR. PEGLEG COMES TO VISIT ME

"*MAX*," I said earnestly, "drive home very slowly and don't let the horse shy once."

"Why?" he asked.

"Mr. Pegleg is old, you know, and not used to horses, and I don't want to frighten him."

Max smiled. "I will bring him home safely to you," he said; "but see here, Judith, I'm getting a trifle jealous; there is Donald Warren and the new-fangled minister, then

poor Mr. Pegleg, whom you are always praising."

"Well, they deserve it," I said.

"What do I deserve?" he asked.

"Much more," I replied; "you deserve to be loved."

Max bent to kiss me. "That is just what I think of you, little wife," he said.

I ran into the house to consult with Rhoda. Somehow, I wanted this month to be one of the happiest in Mr. Pegleg's life. Rhoda and I dragged a great cushioned chair into the south chamber and laid the wood for a fire — should it grow cool. I picked a handful of my choicest roses while the dew was on them. Roses cannot bear to be picked when the hot sun smites them; they droop so quickly; but at early morn and at evening one

can safely cut them and they will remain fresh for a long time. I placed my flowers in a tall green vase on the table and my coarse print Bible beside it: some little volumes by John Burroughs, for Mr. Pegleg loves to read about the birds and the flowers.

Rhoda watched me, standing in the doorway, with arms akimbo, her favourite attitude in repose.

"Honey," she said at last, "can't I mak' dat ole man a mint-julep?"

"It would be nice, Rhoda," I said; "but there's liquor in a mint-julep."

"Jes' a tech, Honey, jes' a tech! De mint bed's so fraish! I'se kin mak' a mint-julep powerful good. Dey's mighty heartenin'."

"To be sure," I said, "Mr. Pegleg is past eighty. He wouldn't be

apt to fall into bad habits; I think you may make one, Rhoda."

My faithful cook went off, her white teeth shining in a delighted smile. I knew the mint-julep would be ready to greet Mr. Pegleg; for Rhoda's heart clings to Southern ways and she is never so happy as when relating her reminiscences of "one ob de fust famblies in de Souf."

It seemed quite a long day in spite of my work. Pat pulled the weeds out of my old-fashioned garden and I examined every plant in the tenderest manner, and smiled when I found it healthy and eager to grow. The little button roses were already in bloom — looking so old-fashioned and quaint that I drew Pat's attention to them.

"The wee darlints!" he ex-

claimed; "shure, they're jest purtindin' to be roses! I loikes shmall flowers; an' I loikes big ones, too," he added. "Shure, 'tis hard to say which ye'll tak'."

"Pat," I remarked later on, "an old gentleman is coming to visit me, who is very fond of flowers."

"Indade, mum, I'm plazed to hear it."

"He will be here to-night; and, Pat, we must make his visit just as pleasant as possible. You understand, don't you?"

"Shure, mum, thot same we must," replied Pat.

To-day I have made a discovery: a pair of wrens have rented our new bird-house. They came this morning, I think; and such a chattering, such a running in and out of the tiny doors! I spent an hour watch-

ing them, when I should have been staking my young dahlias. This afternoon I have been down to the brook. The iris is in bloom, but the forget-me-not's wee blue eyes are nearly closed. Next year, how the iris will have multiplied! My little winding brook will be bordered with the gayest of colours. I stood on the foot-bridge and looked over the high rail fence into a field that adjoins my garden. The brook winds through it like a silver ribbon: and this year the field is one mass of delicious red clover. Over it the bees boom all day long; and oh, the scents that were wafted to me! I was just about to climb the fence, when Pat called to me.

"Missus," he said, "ye'd betther not cross into the field; there is a

bull in the lane yender; and shure, the fence is poor enough."

I looked beyond the field to the lane, and saw a creature quietly grazing.

It vexed me to think I could not cross the fence; for I had a fancy to lie down in the clover. I wanted, for once, to know just how such a fragrant couch would feel, and to watch for a while the great azure dome above me. How the bees would buzz around me and the butterflies flit across my face! The more I thought about it, the more I felt the presence of that bull to be a personal affront to me. Presently, I perched myself upon a rail and sat listening to the meadow-larks calling in their sweet, long-drawn "Chaaic! chaaic!" They had nests hidden in the blos-

soming clover. How I should love to spy one and count the eggs; but not to disturb it, oh, no!

The longer I looked at that field, the more desirable it became. I began to plan — if I owned it — how I would plant daffodils along the brook, and why not border its four sides with hedgerows? Then it would look like an English field. I would set out the tall elderberry, whose white cymes waver in the twilight, like wraiths of flowers; and later on glisten with blood-red berries. The sumac should grow there, its velvety pyramids daintily pink in spring, and deepening to richest crimson as summer advanced. When frost touched the sumac leaves, what a riot of scarlet and gold! I would have wild clematis creeping round that field and

waving in festoons from the topmost rails of the fence, a prey to every gay light wind; and a wild grape-vine spreading its cool green leaves over young shrubs and climbing at last the tall slippery-elm tree in yonder corner. I love a wild grape-vine; its great leaves are so softly lined with white, and oh, how tart are the little clusters of black grapes! And raspberry bushes I must have, if only for the delicious scent on sunny days, that tells plainer than words that raspberries are ripening, and blackberries, too. How could I get along without blackberries, for, aside from the fruit, there are such dainty white clustered blooms in spring and such radiant foliage in autumn! Then fireflies love to dart through a tangle of blackberry bushes. On

hot nights in summer, how I should enjoy such a carnival in my field, — those hundreds and hundreds of busy little lanterns darting here and there in the gayest confusion. I should not forget the wild roses, — the sweetbriar with its faint pink bloom, and those other roses of deeper tint and many-petalled. I must have field-lilies, lifting scarlet cups to be filled with dew, from out the tall grass; and buttercups like imprisoned sunshine; gold hearts and brown-eyed Susans; white clover, and every other sweet thing that loves a field. Bobolinks would dash about in coats of black and white, and yellow ruffs, singing like mad; and Bob Whites would perch on the rails of the fence to call "More wet! more wet!" Slowly the clouds would spread

across the soft blue sky and the refreshing rain come softly down upon this bit of Paradise — my field. When it had slackened, I would go out and trail and trail through the wetness until my gown and petticoats were soaked; then return home to be scolded by Max and Rhoda. One can bear a good deal of scolding if the fun has been adequate. But that bull — that terrible bull — how dared he eat grass so quietly in yonder lane?

I sat for an hour or more on the rail fence and desired the field. I decided in my own mind that with such a possession added to my garden, I could better live up to my idea of a Christian life. There would be that much more space to beautify — in which to glorify God.

When at last I climbed down, an

idea had occurred to me — I owed my Aunt Matilda a letter. How had I neglected her so long? I hate to write letters when the sun is shining, but then it was my duty; and well, I can be persuaded to obey duty once in a while. I wrote:

"DEAR AUNT MATILDA:

"I am well as usual; why should I be ill? The garden is growing in a way that delights my soul. The next day after you left us, I bought five hundred gladiolus bulbs and planted them beside my arbor-vitae hedge. I expect when they bloom in late August, I shall worship them like a very pagan. Max is well. Yesterday I purchased a machine for exterminating bugs. It was invented by Mr. Brown. I fear it will only work in a potato

patch. To-night, Mr. Pegleg comes to visit me. I don't like his name; it seems so impolite to call him that, for my dear old friend has lost a leg and wears a wooden stump. At first I thought some one had nicknamed him, but I found out differently. Fate is often unkind. He is so fond of flowers that I expect we shall talk of nothing else. I hope your gout is better? I often think of you. Do you remember the field just back of my garden? Well, I was going to cross it this afternoon — just to scent the red clover that is all in bloom, when Pat called to me that there was a bull in the lane, just beyond, and the fence is poor. I had on my red shirt-waist. I suppose if I had crossed that field the bull would have jumped after me and killed

me. If I only owned the field I should put up a high fence between it and the lane; one that would keep out all dangerous animals; for I fear (I am so absent-minded) that I may one day forget and enter the field.

"Dear aunt, I send you my heartiest love.

"Your affectionate niece,

"JUDITH."

I put the letter in our little post box by the gate and then sat down to wait patiently for Max.

He came early; and when I saw beside him that dear old face with its aureole of shining white hair, I was so happy that tears sprang to my eyes. Mr. Pegleg seemed just as pleased to see me. Like two children we walked through the gar-

den. I showed him all my flowers, and he was sincerely happy over them.

How lovely it is to have some one who really appreciates your efforts; who seems to know what you are feeling inside your heart. Mr. Pegleg is that kind.

He drank only a little of the mint-julep; I suspect Rhoda had the rest.



XV

MY AUNT'S DREAM

THERE are all sorts of visitors. There is the visitor who tires you so that you almost long for death — or else, to have the visitor die. This is a person whose spirit is not akin to yours. When you have conversed with him for ten minutes, there is nothing left to talk about; and yet you know you must talk. Well, things get rather trying after a little while.

Then there is the visitor who

interests you for a day or two; after that it is best for him to go, and best for you to see that he goes. There is the visitor who can stay a week and be welcome — no longer. I rarely go visiting myself; for I have a notion that nobody wants a garden woman around. Still, there is one friend who is akin to me, a golden-haired, cheery, plant-loving soul, that I venture to visit. I do not feel strange with her; for she can easily stay up half the night to talk about gardens. When we are discussing plants and vegetables we are enjoying ourselves. I often think it strange that the whole world does not sit down to these heart-satisfying talks. If all realized the enjoyment of a garden there would be nothing but gardens. Peevish

women would grow fat and rosy, cross men become bearable, and the wilderness bloom.

Mr. Pegleg was a visitor that made me no trouble. He fitted into the garden as cosily as he had fitted into my greenhouse. Then it was June and the sky was so divinely blue and the air so charged with ozone, that he seemed to renew his youth. How briskly his wooden stump got over the ground, and how eager he was to cross the bridge with me to the grove. Every morning, after we had seen all the flowers, I left him to rest a while on the shady bench beneath the morning-glories. The bee on sweet errands would boom around him, or hide in the foxglove bells; and the butterfly with ethereal wings dance by. A saucy wren would

issue from the bird-house to sing his gay insouciant song, — a bit of jargon, not in the least spiritual. I would bid the dear old man good-bye, and go about my duties. One morning he asked for paper and pencil. I brought them; and often, during the long forenoon, passing and repassing, I observed him busily writing I knew not what, nor did I seek to know.

To-day Araminta came dancing toward me with a letter waving in her small black hand. I was busy clipping seed-pods from the sweet pease. When one has a long trellis to look over, why — letters are of small consequence. However, I was glad to hear from Aunt Matilda. She had received my letter and made haste to reply. She wrote:

"My Dear, Dear Child: You cannot imagine my feelings when I read your last letter. What a narrow escape! I shudder to think, had that bull pursued you! You owe a debt of gratitude to your gardener.

"I have passed a fearful night dreaming of you. Once, I thought you had forgotten and entered the field. The bull was watching for you; with a frightful leap he cleared the fence and charged upon you. I saw your red dress tossing in the air. The shock was so great that I awoke, only to fall asleep again to see you chased round and round the field by that awful creature — his horns lowered.

"Oh, my dear niece, hasten to buy that field — you must buy it. See the owner at once and get his

price. Your own aunt will send the money, — gladly, gladly! Then build a fence ten feet high of the strongest material; put iron pickets on top of it, so the bull cannot possibly jump over it. I shall not rest easy until I hear from you. My gout is better.

"Your loving

"AUNT MATILDA."

It was nearly noon when I received this letter. I took a hasty lunch and started to interview the farmer who owned the field.

The day could not have been gayer. I avoided the road and took a short cut, because I like to walk in the fields. I felt very calm and satisfied. Providence had certainly been good to me. It was quite clear that had the bull never been pas-

tured in the lane, I should not have written that letter to Aunt Matilda. How the small affairs of life lead up to great events! Now, I should own the field and those air-castles were not built in vain.

Mr. Spear, the farmer, was down in the back pasture, his wife told me; but she offered to blow the horn for him. "I expect it will jest about scare him to death," she remarked, "as I never blow it only at mealtime."

"Why?" I asked.

"Oh, he'll think somethin' awful has happened. He's allus on a teeter expectin' trouble."

"Don't blow it," I said; "I had just as soon walk down to the field and speak with him. You point the way."

She did; and I found Mr. Spear

hard at work, cutting down the shrubbery around a good-sized field. He looked very warm, and rubbed his shirt-sleeve across a red and puffy face.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Spear," I said; "I am Mrs. Elliot."

"Glad to see you, ma'am. I've heerd of you! Hope my critter hain't broke into your garding? 'Twould be an all-fired pity to spile them posies."

I assured him that nothing of the sort had happened.

"Hot, ain't it?" he remarked.

"Not very," I said.

"Wall, I feel so. Them goldum bushes air hard to cut."

"Why do you cut them?"

"'Cause I don't care to have my fields look so shiftless."

"Mr. Spear," I said, looking him

straight in the eye, "you are making a mistake. Are you troubled with insects?"

"I sh'u'd say so," he replied. "Guess it'll get so a man can't raise nothin' arter a while. Bugs gobblin' everything. This year that dumbed Hessian fly's round. Sumtimes it seems to me the Lord's got a grudge 'gainst farmers."

"It isn't the Lord, Mr. Spear; it's yourself."

"Want to know! Wall, ole Parson Hackett uster say we was all worms o' the dust. Mabbe you think 'tis my sins; though I didn't guess you was so all-fired religious, Mrs. Elliot."

"I suppose we are all sinners, Mr. Spear," I replied, "but I was not thinking of that. The reason you should not cut down the shrub-

bery that borders your field is a very good one. By doing so you are aiding to increase the very pests you long to be rid of. Your trim fields make open places in which the larvae of insects delight to breed. They actually prefer the under side of a fence rail to deposit their eggs or to spin their cocoons; and with the loss of shrubbery the hot sun soon reaches them and helps them to become bugs. Again, the hedgerows about your fields are the natural homes for innumerable birds that delight to devour insects. You certainly are making a great mistake, Mr. Spear."

"Well, I'll be gol-dumbed!" remarked that individual, throwing down his axe. "It's live and larn! Here I've been a-breakin' my back these last three years — a-cuttin'

down every bush that dared to grow round my fields; an' bugs a-gettin' more plentiful all the time. Weevil in the wheat, cut-worms, Hessian fly, grasshoppers, locusts and I don't know what! An' now, 'long comes a woman — what I thought didn't know nothin' above posies, and tells me this. I dew declare! I never was more s'prised in my life. Thanky."

"You are very welcome to the information, Mr. Spear. I only happened to think of it when I saw you working so hard. I have a little matter of business with you. That field next to my garden — could you be induced to part with it?"

Mr. Spear's long, angular face brightened. "Wus you thinkin' o' buyin' it? It's a five-acre lot and

putty good sile; I dunno, but I might be injuced to part with it."

"How much would you want for it?" I asked.

"Wall now, Mrs. Elliot, how much would you be willin' to give fur it? Yew jest set a price."

I thought of Aunt Matilda's riches and calculated as to how much I dared offer. I was determined to have the field. In truth it was my duty to buy it, if only to put my aunt's mind at ease. "I should think," I ventured timidly, "it is worth at least a thousand dollars."

Mr. Spear's face fairly glowed, but he was cautious.

"Would you be willin' to give that for it, Mrs. Elliot?"

"Yes," I said slowly, "I think I would."

"Wall then, that's the least I'll take fur it. The field's yourn. Gosh! I bet it'll look mighty putty next year, all set out to posies."

A week later Mr. Spear and I had arranged our business to the entire satisfaction of each. He was the possessor of a thousand-dollar check — obligingly sent by Aunt Matilda. Poor woman, she considered that I had done well: for it seemed to her a small sum to pay for such a large patch of land, judging from the way lots sold in her native city. I was the proud possessor of a deed that conveyed this particular patch of land to me and my heirs and assigns for ever and a day.

It was with no small pride that I coaxed Max to the foot of the garden one evening, and pointing

to the field, bade him behold our land.

"How does it come to be ours?" he inquired.

"Easily enough," I replied; "I purchased it from Mr. Spear."

"Where did you get the money?"

"I have a rich aunt," I remarked. "When she heard there was a bull in yonder lane, she quite forced me to buy the field. Just think, Max, your own Judith might have been gored by a bull. Now I shall put up a fence between us and that lane."

"Umph!" ejaculated Max. "How much did you pay for the lot?"

"A thousand dollars."

"How large is it?"

"Five acres."

"Oh," groaned Max; "and farm land selling for seventy-five dollars an acre! Judith, you need a guardian. Why did you not consult me as to this transaction, before concluding it?"

"Because," I replied, "you would have asked why I wanted the field, and just what I wanted to do with it. You would have said that the garden was large enough for me, and that it was very foolish to buy more land. Husbands are so frank that I determined for once to follow my own sweet will. I know I shall never repent buying this field."

Max sighed. I wish he would not sigh when I am pleased. The best way, however, is not to notice that he is sighing; so I changed the conversation to a topic I knew

would please him. "It is dinner-time," I said; "and what do you think? Rhoda has frozen us a fine Nesselrode pudding."



THE HAUNTED ROSE GARDEN XVI

SOME one has said: "If the sun be not God, it is surely His first cousin;" and how can one think otherwise, when he beholds that great orb rising in all its majesty from behind the purple hills: gladdening with a morning kiss the smiling earth; dimpling into gold the shadowy lake. How I love God's first cousin!

My husband is slumbering, but I am abroad; wide awake, and filled with a buoyancy that is the birth-

right of dawn. The dew is everywhere; tipping the little perky grass blades, hanging in shining globes on the leaves of the tall elderberry bush which brushes me as I pass. What am I seeking? Wild roses, to be sure. Have I not enough in my own garden? No, not enough; for what cultivated rose dares to equal in fragrance the wild, exquisite perfume of sweetbriar? Already the goldfinch is tilting on a tall bull-thistle; singing as if he could not praise loud enough. It is not such a bad thing to be a goldfinch; he is a bird that never gets melancholy. This is a good world for him. He gets up early in the morning, hies himself to a convenient thistle, and warbles a hearty prayer; then he hunts a few fat worms and sings some

more. I imagine that in the first song he tells God how thankful he is that another day has dawned, and how good and trustful he intends to be. After he has had his breakfast, he thanks God for those nice fat worms; and all through the day in little cheerful warbles, keeps up the praise. A bit of black and gold; beautiful as a flower, cheerful as a sunbeam.

"What is to hinder me from being cheerful?" I exclaimed as I climbed a rail fence and slid down into a meadow. "Nothing in this world. I don't consider life a failure;" then I stooped and washed my face in the dew. It makes one's complexion so pretty to bathe in the dew; and since Aunt Matilda has intimated that I shall go to seed early, why, I take this harmless

precaution to prevent it. I honestly think that if my aunt would get up mornings and bathe her face in the dew she would look better. What fun can there be in lying abed, computing your miseries, dwelling upon an ache here and an ache there, when you might be so happy washing your face in dew and tramping through the fields?

I like the meadow. The bobolinks are singing all through it and larks are rising on swift, lithe wings. I sample again its dew on my face; then I turn and look boldly at God's first cousin. His raiment has not yet grown too bright for mortal's eyes. "Behold," I said, "one woman who will enjoy herself."

At length I came across the sweetbriar, pink with bloom, glis-

tening with dew; so fragrant that it seemed as if an invisible fairy were swinging a censer near me. I cut the blooms tenderly, leaving enough on the bush for beauty's sake; then I put them carefully in my round basket and started for home.

"Now," thought I, "why not choose a new path?" I climbed another fence and entered a wood all twinkling with sunshine. The ferns looked like golden arrows; red squirrels and chipmunks ran before me; wood birds twittered and sang. I hated to leave this wood; there was so much in it I wanted to see. It ended too soon. Midway in a field, I came to a brook — a laughing, jumping sort of a stream fully six feet wide and no bridge to cross it.

There was but one thing to do, wade it. I divested myself of shoes and stockings; rolled the stockings into two hard little balls and thrust one inside each shoe. I tied the shoes together and, standing back, threw them with might and main across the brook. They landed far on the other side; then with my basket on one arm, I lifted my skirts and boldly waded in. I crossed the brook in safety; then recrossed it, just for the pleasure of feeling the swift water on my feet. Crossed it again and recrossed it, laughing when I slipped on the smooth stones. It was such glorious fun that I kept it up until I began to fear God's first cousin would wilt my roses.

I reached home then, before Max was down, in time to decorate our

breakfast table with my roses. I scattered them over the snowy cloth. I filled a green glass vase with them and they hung over its sloping brim in a graceful abandon.

Max smiled when he beheld them. "Trophies, early wanderer?" he inquired. Mr. Pegleg raised a flower and smelled it; then he gazed at it lovingly. It always pleases me to see his appreciation of "God's kindly expressions," as he calls the roses. I know it is just this appreciation that has made his life so happy. How one ought to cultivate the art of loving things, if only for the sake of pure enjoyment.

Max is fond of Mr. Pegleg. He waits upon him more tenderly than I do. To-day he said: "It is going to be very warm, Judith. Be sure

to keep Mr. Pegleg in the shade." Have I not a thoughtful husband?

I shall never forget that June day. Oh, how fair it was! Mr. Pegleg and I wandered through the gardens and blessed the flowers. The roses were wonderful, from the daintiest opening buds to full blooms of loosely clustered petals. The blue larkspur gleamed as if enamelled and reminded me of the steel armour of the dragon-fly. The hollyhocks were just in bud; and a certain red poppy bed was gorgeous. These were early blooms, self-sown from last year's harvest. Each fluted scarlet petal seemed to flush the redder as the sunbeams kissed it; and there was a gayety over all that made one ashamed to be sad. The poppy seeds that I had sown were now

six inches above the ground, clothed in gray-green, so cool to look upon. In a month, there would be another gorgeous poppy bed beside the summer-house. My guest and I continued our walk to the end of the lawn, where stood a snowball tree, that I have forgotten to mention. This tree had vexed me; for in early spring I beheld it the victim to a host of horrid lavender-tinted bugs. They swarmed its branches and curled and withered its freshly starting leaves. Pat had sworn at the parasites in Irish (out of respect to me); then he utterly douched the tree in an emulsion of whale-oil soap and water. It was rather late in blooming; but rid of unwelcome guests, it struggled to renew itself; and now its white globes gleamed amid the dark-

green leaves like soft bunches of snow. I picked a branch which bore six balls and placed it in my basket, a bit of coolness amid more richly tinted flowers.

I felt idle that morning, so idle that I whiled away the time talking to my dear old friend. I confided to him my plans concerning the field I had purchased. To be truthful, I must confess that the buying of that field troubled me. I knew I had made a bad bargain; and it was not until a week or so later that I grew easy about it. This was one fine Sunday, when I met the Spear family driving to church in a nice new carriage; Mrs. Spear arrayed in a shiny black silk with a bonnet on her head that fairly cried out, "I am new!" She and her husband bowed to me in

the most agreeable manner. I had heard that the thousand-dollar check was a God-send to them. After all, what harm if I did pay a large price for a small piece of land? The field would not be less beautiful nor would my Aunt Matilda miss the money. She often gave more than that to the heathen, with whom she is not acquainted. This time she and I had brought real happiness into a dull little country home: brightened up the life of a poor farmer and his overworked wife; for surely it was my idea, if Aunt Matilda's money. I felt myself to be a very virtuous sinner as I climbed the fence and cut across lots to the little church where Mr. Simmons preaches.

One is always obliged to listen to Mr. Simmons's sermons. There is

no dropping off into a pleasant doze, and being awakened by a bumble-bee buzzing through the open window — just to taste the rose at your corsage. It has always been a fault of mine to sleep in church; but never under Mr. Simmons.

To-day, sitting in the shade of the elm, I told Mr. Pegleg about a certain sermon.

"Mr. Simmons thinks," I said, "that every one's birthright is happiness; but do you know, Mr. Pegleg, I was brought up to the belief that this world is a vale of tears. I was told not to expect happiness, but to look forward to sorrow. I have never felt pleased with the looking forward. I have such a capacity for enjoyment that I sometimes fear I am a creature without

a soul — a reincarnation of some wild, woodsy thing. If it should be so, and I must return to the earth innumerable times, why, I hope each time, for the sake of my own enjoyment, I shall grow a little wilder, a little more woodsy; for where can one find such peace and joy as in God's great out-of-doors?

"I suppose," I continued, musingly, "a soul is a very valuable possession; yet one must admit, it is a very troublesome one. It is that part of you that is always trying to escape. It runs round and round the little prison of your body and beats itself against the iron bars of circumstance. Then to think of the people who possess oversouls; those sensitive, weeping beings who go through life per-

fectly miserable from beginning to end. They cannot help it, I dare say; yet, I have always felt thankful that my soul is not too vigorous for my body."

Mr. Pegleg laughed. "You have queer notions, daughter," he said; "you may be thankful that you have a good healthy out-of-door soul. It is the love for the real in life that makes one happy. Nearly all troubles are man-made. Our thoughts are great builders; they rear for us a palace or a hovel. If we will dwell upon the dark things of life we shall behold naught but shadows, though the sun be shining just beyond. I have come a long way, daughter, but there has always been spring-time in my life; flowers have strewn my pathway. It was because I would have it so.

Now, I think I am nearly to the end of this earth-life. All day long I have seen about me a fair young spirit — one whom I dearly love. I shall not mind death if she takes me by the hand and leads me home."

"Oh, tell me about her!" I pleaded.

"Surely, daughter. She was my betrothed. It seems only yesterday that I was young and stalwart, and we stood side by side in a quaint old moonlit garden. We were reading the time on a moon-dial, Janie and I. The soft, evasive light made shifting shadows on her prim white gown and flooded her fair young face. She wore on her head a wreath of red roses that I had fashioned for her. Janie was over-fond of blooms. 'Sweet-

heart,' I said softly, 'I love you. Will you be my wife? See, I will wait until the shadow has crept to yonder space on the dial, for your answer.'

"I turned and looked down the dim garden — to give her time; still, from a corner of my eye I watched the moon-dial. I saw Janie reach out for tendrils of a honeysuckle and strip them of their leaves; then she bent above the pedestal. Finally, when I knew the shadow had surely crept across the allotted space, I turned. Janie was gone; but plainly in the moonlight I saw the tendrils laid cunningly across the dial, and they spelled one sweet word, 'Yes.' Shy Janie! I sought the garden through and through before I found her and kissed her.

"Her father was wealthy for those days; while I was but a poor boy with my mother and two little sisters to support. We could not think of marriage until I had carved my way in life. But true love makes a stout heart in a man, and I felt sure of overcoming all difficulties. An opening chanced for me in a distant city. I accepted it, kissed my little sweetheart good-bye, bidding her have good cheer and to wait for me. Late that winter I received a letter from her father. He wrote: 'Janie is ill. She wishes to see you. Come at once.'

"I got leave of absence and went. I found my little sweetheart a victim to quick consumption. For a week I sat every day beside her bed, and she told me the thoughts

of her heart. She said: 'I shall not go very far away — I feel it. I shall always be able to see you and to love you. I want you to do your best in life. I want you to help every one you can; and so to live that when we meet there shall be nothing but happiness between us forever more.'

"I have tried to keep my promise to her," said Mr. Pegleg, softly. "At first it was hard not to grow selfish and unkind; the world seemed so lonely without Janie. I did not feel interested in people; still, for the sake of my little sweetheart, I strove to lift a burden here and there; to speak a gentle word and to give a little measure of love. I was repaid at last, when it dawned upon me that this was the road to happiness — the path to peace.

To-day, I have seen my young love among your roses, yonder; smelling the blooms in her graceful way, lifting the prim skirt to her dainty white gown, and wearing on her head my wreath of red roses."

I turned and looked at that sea of bloom, the yellow, the crimson, the pink, the white; but my earth-dulled eyes could not behold her; yet I thought, "I shall always think of her among my roses, even as he seemed to see her."

Presently, Mr. Pegleg drew from his pocket a roll of paper. "Daughter," he said, smiling, "it has always been a whim of mine to preach my own funeral sermon. There are things I want so much to say. I have written them down — here, among your flowers. Will you not keep this paper, and if I

die before you do, see that it is read at my funeral? Another favour I would ask: I want you to repeat upon that occasion my favourite poem, the one by Edward Sill."

"I promise," I said, — the tears very near my eyes; "but oh, Mr. Pegleg, how can you talk of death in June, when the earth is so fair? I could not, I would not die in June!"

"I shall only cross the threshold into a fairer world than this, daughter."

He fell asleep, presently, and I ran into the house for a pillow to place behind his head. How serene his face looked, surrounded by its wealth of snowy hair! It was such a good, true face, that it rested one to gaze at it. I imagined, no matter how sad or discouraged one might

feel, Mr. Pegleg could comfort him.

As for me, I went for a walk around my field, and forgot to be sad.



XVII

MR. PEGLEG'S SWEETHEART LEADS HIM HOME

I SHALL always think my roses bloomed the fairer for Mr. Pegleg's presence, or was it the spirit of his little sweetheart stealing among them, that induced them to open so wonderfully perfect? There was scarcely a blighted bud; and the dusky green foliage was delightfully healthy and free from bugs. Even our great and good friend, the sun, seemed to veil himself at noontime behind a gauzy cloud, lest he

might smile upon them too ardently.

Knowing that this feast of roses would not always be spread for our delectation, we made the best of the time. I had the table brought out warm evenings, and we dined in this garden of glory. The white cloth was strewn with roses, and a great bowl filled with them set in our midst. Araminta Sprangleberry stood behind our chairs and waved a large fan of peacock feathers to keep off the flies; while Rhoda served us with excellent viands. I considered that this was part of an ideal existence that well pleased me.

For the first time, Max admitted that a garden was truly a paradise, or else the first approach to high heaven. "If it could always be

June," he said, "and the roses in bloom, as they are now, what more could one ask?"

Mr. Pegleg smiled; but I stoutly declared that a garden is always a paradise. Even in winter, it is a paradise asleep.

Once again, Mr. Pegleg told me that he had seen his little sweetheart among my roses. It was a still, calm afternoon, and we were sitting on a bench beneath the morning-glories, our favourite seat. When he ceased speaking, I noticed that his face looked wan and he seemed weary.

"Would you not like to be alone a little while?" I asked.

He looked at me gratefully. "Daughter," he said, "how you comprehend me! I would like to rest a while — to be very quiet."

I put a pillow behind his back and pulled gently at the morning-glory vines that they might better shade him; then I stole away, looking back once, to wonder at the rapt look on his face and the light in his eyes that shone not for me.

I took my boat and rowed to the lake. There, in the shadow of a tall buttonwood tree, I fell to thinking of Mr. Pegleg's early love. Could it be true that one really never died — that her spirit wandered among my roses? How I wished I knew a little more about it all, this strange, mysterious going away. Mr. Pegleg believed and was blessed; but I — I was not so sure. It seemed to me, I had better cling to this terrestrial globe. Here I was well acquainted with an earthly paradise of my own; while I had not

even a bowing acquaintance with that mystical beyond. In a well-timed prayer, I asked the Lord that he would stretch out my years as long as possible; "for," I argued, "I am truly fond of the earth. I love everything that goes to make peace in the heart; the flowers, the trees, the vegetables, the birds, the sky, and the stirring waters; the good brown soil and all the animals; — man included," I added as an afterthought. "Oh, yes, I love my fellow-man; but I am not quite so much interested in him as I am in nature."

I often think it may be wrong, this fondness for living, but how can I help it? I feel so well and hearty, so green and bushy-like, so in love with every smile of Nature, that — well — I wish I might lin-

ger on this earth for hundreds of years.

The afternoon waned as I sat lost in thought. The lake wimpled with a sudden little breeze and in the wood the cheerful birds began to sing. There were concerts all about me, glad paeans to life. I knew it was time to go home. Surely, Mr. Pegleg's reverie would be ended by now, and we could resume our conversation on plants, bulbs, and their promised wealth of blooms.

When I reached our boat landing I found Pat awaiting me. He stood in the soft light with bowed head, cap in hand.

"What is it, Pat?" I asked in a trembling voice.

"The ould gintleman, Missus."

Silently he led the way, and there — still sitting in the same attitude,

with that rapt look upon his face — was my dear old friend; mine no longer, for his early love, she whom he had seen among the roses, had taken him by the hand and led him home.

Pat crossed himself reverently, and his lips moved in prayer; but I — I could not weep. There was a hard lump in my throat which threatened to choke me. I covered my face with my hands and sank to the ground.

When I recovered, Max was bending over me. "My poor little girl," he said, "what a dreadful shock!" My tears began to flow and I wept softly and long; not for Mr. Pegleg, but for my own loss.

We sent for the niece and her husband, with whom Mr. Pegleg

had lived. They came, and the little careworn woman touched the dead face reverently and stroked the silvery hair. "Uncle was so good!" she said.

Then I told her his last wishes and asked her if we might have the funeral here.

"I should like it," she said, "for uncle loved the country, and he was very fond of you, Mrs. Elliot."

So we arranged it. I suggested that he should be buried in the little graveyard on the hill. Together, his niece and I went and picked out a sunny spot, where we knew flowers would delight to bloom and birds linger to sing. It would not matter to Mr. Pegleg, for tombs are to please the living, not the dead; they are merely spots for remembrance.

There were no emblems of mourning at this little funeral. A few friends were invited, among them Priscilla Brown and her father; others, who loved Mr. Pegleg, drove out from town.

The casket stood in the shade of the old elm tree on the lawn, and a simple wreath of white roses adorned it. Above, gleamed a blue June sky. A hushed day, as if even nature paused in reverence for the occasion.

We gathered in a little group, and Mr. Simmons offered a prayer, one of hope and inspiration; then he said: "Our friend in going forth left behind him words of comfort, which I have here. You shall listen to them."

He unfolded the paper I had given him and read Mr. Pegleg's

funeral sermon — written by his own hand.

"DEAR FRIENDS: You stand in the presence of that which you call death; I call it life. You wonder and grieve like bewildered little children, for God's ways seem so mysterious. But do not grieve for me. All my days I have been as a prisoner in an earthly cage; if the door be opened now, and I escape, — is it not my gain? Still, I would not have you think that I found my prison barren or my jailor unkind. Some beat and bruise their souls against the bars of this earthly life; but I early yielded and became submissive to my lot. I learned to trust and to wait. Among my fellow-men I discovered such gentle souls, such kind and loving hearts that I could not be unhappy. In

loving them I forgot the evils of life and kept the good.

"Now I have fared forth, and you call it death. I call it life; the only real life of man. Perhaps, to-day, I may stand in your midst and smile at my freedom; for what can limit the power of spirit, who can say, 'It shall not'? If God had meant death to separate us, then were the golden cord of love more fragile, the human heart less faithful. Now, who can snap that slender cord or bid an aching heart forget? So I say, I shall not have gone very far away; only slipped over into a border-land, from whence dear ones return to comfort us, whispering words of good cheer, binding up our broken hearts, pointing to a star of hope which beams above every grave.

"But it is not of a life beyond that I wish most to speak to-day. It is of *your* earthly life, dear friends, the little round of toil and duty that still absorbs you. If I might speak from the experience of many years, I should tell you that you are not happy enough; that you are not trustful enough. You will not believe in the evidence God has set all about you; of his undying regard for your welfare. You weep when you might be glad: you bear burdens that were never meant for you.

"I have been only a simple old man of few words, but to-day, I bid you hope. I bid you look upward, not downward. Do not think of death as something dark and gloomy; but as of something to be lived for, — the goal of peace

and joy. Travel on with a light heart, loving and being loved; for what is there to fear? Trust, and some gentle spirit will take you by the hand and guide you. You will be taught to look beyond evil to good; to meet harshness with kindness; to be gentle yet true. Thus will you build yourself a character, which is like storing sunshine for all eternity. Believe me, death does nothing but cast aside the little heap of dust which, moulded into a shape, concealed your spirit.

"I bless you, I still love you; my peace I give unto you."

Mr. Simmons folded the paper, and stood for a moment — silent. There in the sweet clear air, with birds singing in the distance and the echo of those hopeful words still

ringing in our ears, how could we feel sad?

"That is all," said the minister.

Then I stepped forward: I cannot tell you what made me so brave; but I remembered my old friend's wish — that I should repeat his favourite poem. My voice trembled a little as I began:

"What if some morning when the stars were paling,
And the dawn whitened, and the east was clear,
Strange peace and rest fell on me from the presence
Of a benignant spirit standing near;

"And I should tell him as he stood beside me,
'This is our earth — most friendly earth, and fair;
Daily its sea and shore through sun and shadow
Faithful it turns, robed in azure air:

"'There is blest living here, loving and serving,
And quest of truth, and serene friendships dear;
But stay not, spirit, earth has one destroyer —
His name is Death: flee, lest he find thee here!'

"And what if then, while the still morning brightened,
And freshened in the elm the summer's breath,
Should gravely smile on me the gentle angel,
And take my hand and say, 'My name is Death.'"

Silently we bore him away, and laid him in the little graveyard. The only words spoken above that disturbed mound of earth were these glad, jubilant words:

"O Death, where is thy sting; O Grave, where is thy victory!"

XVIII

I SEND GIFTS TO THE MISSES LARK

OH, how I shall miss my dear old friend! but the garden seems the richer for having known him. The flowers that he loved bloom brightly, as if to comfort me; and all the roses remind me of his little sweetheart. I often wonder if these two are walking hand in hand in a fairer garden than mine. Are they picking the flowers, do they ever speak of me? Perhaps, Mr. Pegleg will say: "There is a little woman on the

earth who loves a garden in such a hearty fashion! How I wish she might behold this perfect spot." Perhaps his little sweetheart will answer, "Nay, she would grow mad with joy. Her soul has not grown up to our garden; she must wait a while." And I — why, I am quite content to wait.

So I think, as I pick a great basket of roses — my own roses — this year, growing on my own bushes; there is such a satisfaction in feeling that I own the bush. Last year they were my roses growing on Tom Norton's bushes. I shall always think that Mr. Norton made a sacrifice in selling this place. He gave up a paradise to a modern Eve. But the modern Eve appreciates ***her*** paradise.

My basket was just running over,

when I heard a soft step behind me. I turned, to behold Priscilla Brown.

"The scarlet creeper has nearly overrun the summer-house," I said cheerily. "Do come and look at it!"

"Are the Madonna lilies in bud?" she asked, looking very innocent.

"Yes, and my gladiolus bulbs a foot high; the old-fashioned garden is a sight; and oh, Priscilla Brown, I have bought me a field! Say, dear, can't you spare me a few forget-me-nots and some clumps of the iris that Hetty Allen, who used to own your place, planted along the creek? I want to edge one side of my brook with them. On the other side, I shall plant daffodils so thickly, that they will shine like a ribbon of gold. Come, let me

show you my field. But for Mr. Spear's bull I could not have owned it. I often think a special Providence rules my life."

"Father sent me over," she broke in, "to ask you how the bug-exterminator worked."

"Oh," I said. "Well, you see, I haven't tried it yet; but I know it is going to work beautifully."

"Father said if it didn't, he should refund the money."

I felt chilly. That old man's conscience is really abnormal. What if he should refund the money, and after all my trouble? "We have been rather busy of late," I explained, "but Pat will surely try the machine to-morrow or the next day; then we will send you word how it works. Please tell your father not to worry."

I thought Priscilla looked rather pale.

"Is anything the matter, dear?" I asked.

"No," she said doubtfully; "nothing much. I am only a little troubled."

"About the hens?"

"Oh, no, the hens are thriving; it is father. You see, he has so nearly completed his aeroplane, that he thinks of taking a trip in it next week. Of course, I feel sure that it is all right, and nothing could happen, but —"

I appreciated that "but." Poor Priscilla! "He will not sail far?" I said. "And do urge him to fly low."

"No, only just around our big lot. He will be very careful at first, then if it works well, why, he will

take longer trips. I feel that he is going to succeed," and her eyes brightened.

I kept Priscilla to lunch, and by talking judiciously about Donald Warren, sought to turn her mind from air-ships. Rhoda set the table on the porch and served us with cold jellied chicken, broiled chops, delicious coffee, and strawberries with cream. Araminta Sprangleberry pirouetted behind us with an asparagus bough, having mislaid her peacock-feather fan.

Did you ever taste strawberries that were picked at just the right hour? Rhoda claims " Dey ain't no good when de sun smuts 'em;" so she rises early in the morning and picks them while the dew is still glistening on their leaves. Then she puts them away in the cool,

dark cellar and they come to the table fresh and firm; truly, God's greatest triumph in berry-making.

Priscilla and I ate, each, a large dish of these strawberries, then we helped ourselves afresh; for, as I wisely commented, "Strawberries last such a short time that one ought to make the most of them."

In the meanwhile Priscilla Brown told me about her mother.

"I was only five years old," she said, "when mother died; but I can see her yet, — so plainly! Father used to take me to the theatre where she acted. Often, she would look so beautiful, when she came upon the stage, that the people would applaud her like mad; but she used only to notice father and me.

"Sometimes I was allowed in her

dressing-room, back of the stage. If she had a little time to spare, after being robed, she would always take me upon her lap and sing to me or pet me. I was so dazzled by her beauty, that I used to wonder if, after all, she were not an angel instead of a real mother.

"She took cold one winter night, playing on a draughty stage, and for days was very, very ill. One evening they brought me to her bedside. She looked at me mournfully out of her great bright eyes; then she drew me to her and held me close. 'Little daughter,' she whispered, 'you must stay and comfort father; but oh, it is hard, so hard to leave you!'

"Next morning father told me she had gone away in the night to be one of God's angels. I remem-

ber crying and saying that I wanted my mother; and that God had enough angels without her.

"'So I think,' replied my father; and he burst into tears and sobbed so dreadfully, that I was frightened and Belinda had to carry me away."

"Poor little Priscilla," I sighed; "you needed your mother."

"Yes," she said gently; "but father has been so good. I can never leave father."

As I looked into that sweet, steadfast face, my heart trembled for Donald Warren. Could he win her?

Sitting opposite her, my eyes took in her dress, a quaint old-fashioned crape of dull pink, strewn thickly with blue bachelor-buttons. It was trimmed with a narrow fringed braid, and on any one else

but Priscilla Brown would have looked decidedly antique. It became her, as everything does.

"Priscilla," I asked presently, "where did you get that gown?"

"It was mother's," she said simply. "She used to wear it as Lady Gay Spanker in an interview with Sir Peter. I have never torn it;" and Priscilla lovingly smoothed out a fold.

"How did your father happen to buy Hetty Allen's place?" was my next question.

"It was this way," replied Priscilla. "We were quite poor and father felt that he was growing old (you see he was twenty years older than my mother), so when his uncle left him a legacy he decided to buy a small place, to make a home for me, he said. Belinda

wanted it to be in the country, where she could raise hens and have a garden; and father thought he should like the quiet. When he heard of this place he came and bought it. That was six years ago."

We arose, and Priscilla said she must be going; for Belinda wished her to do an errand. She had asked Priscilla to purchase some butter from Mrs. Sullivan.

"If you will wait a few minutes," I said, "I will walk along with you. I was intending to pay a visit to my little neighbour on the cross-road, beyond Mrs. Sullivan's. I have not seen her in a long time and this morning I picked her a basket of roses."

I hurried in for my straw hat and the flowers, which I had placed in

the cold cellar. Telling Rhoda where I was going, I set out with Priscilla.

As we walked along I was feeling comfortably cheery. Presently Priscilla Brown said to me:

"Mrs. Elliot, you are the happiest woman I ever knew. I wish you would tell me how to be so happy."

I expressed surprise. "It is easy enough," I said. "Just love everything you see, and never think about evil. I imagine all gardeners are happy. It is the good out-of-door life and the pleasure of watching green things grow. I don't know how to be low-spirited. I think, my dear, I am a little like bottled champagne — just waiting for the cork to be drawn to fizz and bubble over; then I have every-

thing I want: a garden, a field, and an editor for a husband."

"You would choose an editor?"

"To be sure I should prefer that my husband were a gardener," I replied; "but next to that honourable profession, I choose an editor."

"Why, may I ask?"

"Because, my dear, editors like harmony in their homes. They have such wrangling with their kind, that when they reach their own firesides they are quite exhausted and long for peace. They are not like some men, smooth-spoken outside, but with a surplus of bitter sarcasm bottled up for home use. An editor says his hard things to a brother editor, and at home is a sweet and pleasant husband."

We had come in sight of Mrs.

Sullivan's and I cut short my eulogy of editors by climbing the fence into a field. I was determined to make a slight detour; because, as I told Priscilla, if Mrs. Sullivan caught sight of me I should be obliged to drink "a cup o' tay," and eat "a biled egg;" and after those delicious strawberries — well, I simply couldn't.



A GARDEN CONFESSION

XIX

I FOUND my friend at home, sitting in her garden, with a big basket of stockings to mend on the bench beside her.

A smile of satisfaction dawned in her eyes when she saw me.

"Welcome, you dear, wholesome out-of-door thing!" she cried; and I felt as flattered as if her salutation had been "Come in, thou Queen of Sheba."

The roses delighted her. She dipped her careworn face in their

scented petals; then held the basket at arm's length to admire them.

"Oh, how happy they make me," she cried; "they are so gloriously perfect, so darkly, richly beautiful!"

"And so healthy," I said, "not a bug on them. Pat and I looked after that. Mr. Pegleg always called roses, 'God's kindly expressions;'" and the tears sprang into my eyes.

I dashed them quickly away; my little neighbour needs laughter and good cheer, not tears. "I have come to see your garden," I said.

"You will not find it much compared with yours," she remarked, "but oh, how I love it! I am all a-tiptoe with eagerness the moment I have sown a seed — watching for it to come up. I fear I did some-

thing very wrong this spring, and all for the sake of my garden. Wait until I put these roses in water, then I will tell you about it."

She hurried into the house and returned presently with two large green glass vases. In these we arranged the roses, allowing some to droop over the flaring brim. The effect was exquisite. "How I do love green glass vases for flowers!" I exclaimed. "You certainly have perfect taste."

"The vases were mother's," she said; "she was fond of flowers."

When we were once more seated on the bench I said to her:

"Now what sins have you committed? Confess."

"I shall have to," she replied, laughingly. "It was this way: my husband is rather close and we have

little ready money, but, as I generally have a cough every spring, he gives me a dollar to buy cod-liver oil; then he watches every day to see that I take it. I know he loves me.

"This spring I deceived him. I took my last year's empty bottle and filled it with molasses; then I added to it a good pinch of soda. When you shook up the bottle you couldn't tell the mixture from cod-liver emulsion. I took a teaspoonful of this three times a day and kept the dollar to buy flower seeds. You see I did so want the seeds. Was it very wicked?"

I did not reply for a moment, I was so stirred with the pity of it. At last I said: "Of course, it was not exactly an orthodox proceeding; but on the other hand, the cod-

liver oil might have killed you, while the flowers are sure to prove pure blessings."

"Sometimes, I feel that it was very wrong in me," she remarked; "but what would you do if you could never have a cent of money — only to buy medicine with or a much-needed dress?"

"I imagine," I replied, "I should be no better than you, dear; I suspect I should be worse; but God sees us and He is a very lenient judge. Do not worry; but tell me did you sow the red poppy seeds I sent you?"

"Indeed I did, and they are up fine and strong. Come and see them."

We went through the garden, she and I, exclaiming and admiring. I discovered a hoe, and wherever

I found a plant that needed a little digging around, why, I just dug.

"I wish I had more time to weed," she said woefully; "but what can one do with six children, and four of them boys?"

"I don't know," I answered truthfully. "If the Lord had seen fit to afflict — I mean bless me with such a large family, I suppose I should bring them up somehow, — higgledy-piggledy. I haven't a particle of discipline. I can't even make Araminta Sprangleberry mind me. Nothing fears me."

"I lack government myself," she said, sadly. "Sometimes the boys set me wild; and after I have scolded them all around, I haven't the strength left to spank them. You may say what you please, but scolding requires strength."

"Does it?" I said wonderingly; "I thought it came easy. A friend of mine warned me once never to acquire that habit. She said, it was so easy to scold that one had only to open her mouth for the words to pop out. She confessed she had been known to scold in her sleep. Perhaps, it is just as well that you haven't the strength left to spank: the scolding may answer every purpose."

"But sometimes they need it," she said mournfully; "oh, how they need it!"

"Cannot the father perform that duty?" I inquired.

"He?" she replied scornfully. "No indeed; he says, that it's woman's work — rearing children."

I put my arm around her, she is so little and careworn! "Don't

worry, dear," I said; "come, take a lesson from your garden. The plants don't need to be disciplined; they are God's children. Perhaps, if you trusted God in regard to your little humans, and scolded less, He would keep an eye on them. I once knew a careless, trusting mother who worried very little over her brood. She said God's angels looked after them; and it did seem as if those children never got a fall or stubbed a toe. I don't believe worrying or scolding helps a bit; but trusting takes our burdens away and lets us draw a free breath of pure happiness."

Then I dug around some pansy roots. "This fall," I said, "I shall send you some bulbs — Madonna lilies and tulips. The tulips are to cheer you up in the spring, and the

lilies are to strengthen your faith in the all-good Providence that loves us and gives us the birthright of happiness."

I put up the hoe, kissed her, and went home.

Half-way I met Araminta Sprangleberry. She looked so very important that I suspected she had news.

"Miss Judith," she called jubilantly, "somefin's done happened. Dat ole cat o' yourn has kotched an' et up de hull fambly o' leetle robins in de maple."

"What!" I cried, horrified.

"Ebery leetle one!" said Araminta.

I knew it was true; for before I reached home I heard the sorrowful cries of the poor parents, and it went to my heart. Pacing up and

down the porch, like a born aristocrat, looking very sleek and fat, was my cat. I knew she had not transgressed upon her nature, but a feeling of revulsion came over me. When she would have rubbed her soft furry head against my gown, I pushed her rudely away. Oh, my poor birds, my poor birds!

They cried until dusky eve; then perched side by side on a limb near the empty nest, as if mutely striving to comfort each other.

As I do not believe in capital punishment, I could not kill the cat; no more could I tie her up or imprison her. There is a certain hauteur in the feline race that forbids familiarity. One can shame a poor dog; but who dares to humiliate the family cat? I decided to give her away.

Next day I heard some good news. The Misses Lark, a couple of dressmakers who live in the cottage beyond Mr. Spear's, had lost their family cat — so the butcher man told me. This cat had died of old age, and was buried with honours under a fall-pippin tree. The poor ladies were feeling very lonely over their loss. I determined to give them a glad surprise: I would send them my cat.

If one has a particle of trust, he will always find an open door to his difficulties. I took my feline upstairs and brushed her fur until it shone; I tied a scarlet ribbon about her neck in a most fetching bow; then I called Araminta Sprangleberry, and bade her bring me the covered basket and a strong bit of cord.

We had some difficulty in persuading the cat to lie still in the basket. She was preternaturally bright, and scented something wrong. I was forced to box her ears; but at last I succeeded in getting the cover down, and securely fastened with a stout twine. Then I put the basket in one of Araminta's moist black hands, and in the other a generous bunch of roses. "Now," I said, "run across the fields as far as Mr. Spear's house; then by the road, just beyond, you will see a little cottage painted white with green blinds. The Misses Lark live there."

"Birds?" inquired Araminta.

"No, ladies. Knock at the door, and when it is opened, say Mrs. Elliot sent the basket and the roses with her compliments."

"Shall I tell 'em de cat et de robins?"

"No, indeed."

"Sha'n't I say nuffin about de cat?"

"Not a word, Araminta."

"Den I'll jes' say, 'Howdy dew, Mis' Elliot done sent dis yer cat an' dese posies wid her comp'ments.'"

There was a twinkle of black heels and an indignant "meow!" from the basket as my messenger disappeared.

Next day I received a grateful letter from the Misses Lark. It made me feel quite self-sacrificing.

"DEAR MRS. ELLIOT:" it ran, "We have received the flowers and the beautiful cat. The sweet creature was delighted to be free from the basket. We at once applied

butter to her paws to make her feel at home. She has, as yet, showed no inclination to abandon us; though, to be sure, we have kept her locked in the woodshed, and feed her on cream three times a day.

"After the loss of our own old Tabitha, we feel that it was like a stroke of Providence, this coming of a new pet. I think maiden ladies are quite apt to be over-fond of their pets, don't you? We can hardly express our thanks to you; to think you should have sent us your own dear kitty, for we remember perfectly seeing the sweet creature about the house, the last time we sewed for you. But it is like you — you are always thinking of others. We thank you so much.

"Yours devotedly,

"PATIENCE AND PRUDENCE LARK.

"P. S. After this kindness, we feel that should you require any dressmaking done, we shall be glad to do it at reduced rates."

How little it takes to make some people happy!

I paid a visit to the maple tree, and told the poor bereaved parents that their tormentor was gone; and that they could return in peace another spring, for I should never again keep a cat. What was my surprise, to see my robins hopping cheerfully about, seemingly making plans to build another nest. "'Tis just as well," I thought, "for why should the heart of a bird be sad? Human hearts can suffer enough for both."

XX MAX TAKES A VACATION

MAX brought home pleasant news one night. He told it to me as we sat in the moonlight beside our little river. I had asked him to go for a row; but he was feeling rather tired, and after all I was quite content to sit and watch the moonbeams bathe in the rippling water, and to count the darting fireflies in the branches of the beech. Moonlight is so bewitching in the country, especially beside a little river. If the sun be

God's first cousin, mayhap the moon is His second cousin. That great golden globe has certainly the right to claim some relationship.

One grows tender at night toward all humanity. I felt very tender toward Max as I sat beside him on the little bench. We sometimes grow a trifle sentimental, particularly in the moonlight. Max has not outgrown the habit of telling me that I am the one woman in the world for him. With all my faults he loves me still; and I — well, I am sure I should never have married at all, had I failed to meet Max.

The news pleased me. My husband had decided to take a week's vacation. The sub-editor, he thought, might be trusted to run the newspaper for that length of

time — provided he (Max) did not go far away. "I must be on hand should any lapses occur," said the dear fellow.

"Max," I remarked, "if you should die, that newspaper would go on just the same."

"Perhaps," he replied; "but while I am alive I consider it a great responsibility."

Poor Max. He is as firmly bound to business as was Ixion to his wheel.

Presently he asked, "Where shall we go, Judith? You know it must not be far from home."

"Let us go camping," I said. "Oh, Max, I have so often thought how I should love to be out in the woods all night; the great solemn woods! I want to hear the owls hoot and all the strange, uncanny

calls from tree to tree. Do let us go camping, dear."

"Who will do the cooking?" inquired Max.

"Oh," I faltered, "I had forgotten that we must eat."

"Eat!" said Max. "One can devour more food while camping than at any other time in his life. I may well ask, Judith, who will do the cooking."

"We could take Rhoda," I ventured. "But then, she wouldn't want to leave Araminta behind; and it would not be camping with Araminta Sprangleberry to spy upon me."

"You may count me out, if that little black imp goes along," said Max.

I thought a while and a bright idea came to me. "I have it!" I

exclaimed forcibly: "We need not go far from home. We will camp in the woods on the south side of the lake. There isn't a lovelier spot in the world. Then Rhoda can cook our meals at home and send them to us by Araminta. Max, I have made up my mind; you must buy a tent to-morrow."

He laughed. "Then we shall spend our vacation not a mile from home?"

"It will be so convenient," I said. "If the Madonna lilies should come out, Pat can easily send me word. I wouldn't miss seeing those lilies bloom."

"And if the sub-editor fakes, I can easily slip into town," said Max. "Judith, you are a far-seeing little woman."

So it was arranged to our satis-

faction, and I dreamed that night of long woodsy aisles with the moonbeams glimmering through them.

Where can one find a sweeter, fairer, more restful spot than the border of a quiet lake?

The sea is ever murmurous, complaining to the land; but the little wavelets that splash against the pebbly beach on my dear, dear lake are like so many tender runes in the ear of nature's child.

We pitched our tent in the edge of the south grove, quite near to the water. Some appreciative soul had occupied this very spot before us and left behind a little wooden platform that I called "our porch." I had Pat bring down two rocking-chairs to place upon this porch; for why not, when one is enjoying

himself, be comfortable as well as happy?

Max demurred a little at my arrangements. He thought we should have a rainy week; but I felt very sure that not a drop of rain would fall. There was a sort of steadfast good-weather look to the sky that reassured me.

It was my first experience in camping out. I had wanted to camp out often enough, but some one always opposed me. The only thing that reconciles me to growing old is that I shall get my way oftener.

Now, it was my own sweet will for one solid week to enjoy a sylvan life. I should have no care, for Rhoda was to prepare our food. It would be brought to us by the saucy, bright-eyed Araminta Sprangle-

berry. She would come trailing through the dew every morning, her jubilant feet scarcely touching the moist brown earth, her fresh young voice lifted in song, a basket on her arm containing our goodly breakfast. I thank God every day for the inestimable blessing of a good cook.

We built a stove out of stones and each morning I had a fire leaping and dancing in it, darting forth in little ruddy tongues of flame through convenient cracks, all ready to heat the coffee. Then I would lay the little board table on our platform with snowy linen and decorate it bountifully with wild flowers. When Araminta had appeared, the coffee had been made and the good things set forth, Max and I would draw up our rocking-

chairs and eat and rock, and rock and eat.

I told Max it reminded me of Mr. Watts's lovely hymn, which runs something like this:

"Here, will I sit and sing" (I substituted rock) "myself away to everlasting bliss."

Araminta always watched us with hungry eyes, anxiously hoping we would leave a few morsels for her. Sometimes it was hard to deny myself, but I respected that mute wish. I would not ask Max to go hungry; but I could curb my own appetite.

"We'se ain't hab nuffin good to eat up to de house," said Araminta; "Aunt Rhody she say brack folks don' need much."

Araminta always hated to leave

us. She would linger about until I was forced to send her home.

One day she said, "Miss Judith, I jes' loves you; I jes' longs to stay wif you. When you'se gwine walkin' in de woods, seems if all de posies knowed it and sprung up de brighter, an' all de birds mos' bust deir sides a-singin'. It's dreffful nice a-walkin' in de woods wif you."

What could I do but let her accompany me? I did not want her, for she disturbed my meditations, but, alas, she has discovered that softer strain in me — I am easily persuaded!

The first night Max and I spent in the woods, we reposed on a bed of fragrant hemlock boughs. They felt rather knotty through the sheets, and Max did so much groan-

ing that I could not hear the owls hoot. When I could endure it no longer I arose and went outside the tent.

I dared not go far, for an uncanny feeling possessed me. Maybe there were witches in the woods! I thought of Macbeth's trio, and thrilled with a sudden terror when quite near me a horrid little screech-owl gave forth its quavering notes. Then, suddenly, across the lake, there was lifted up a mournful voice, so heart-breaking in its pathos, that I turned and ran quickly back to the tent. I learned next day this was but the voice of Mr. Spear's donkey, that loves to bray at night.

I crawled up close to Max and at last fell asleep. I awoke at four. The gray light of early dawn was

sifting through the flap of the tent; and outside, soft and clear, like molten melody, sounded the notes of the wood-thrush, welcoming and blessing the coming day. Down the long aisles of the wood came answering notes, sweet and distant; and presently, it seemed as if the whole grove were filled with music. I arose and made a quick toilet.

The lake was still gray when I launched my boat upon it; but suddenly it began to twinkle, and vague little lines of light shot over it. Yonder, near the rushes, ghost-like wisps of mist lifted and stole quickly away. A loon laughed, and through the dimness a crane rose, trailing his long black legs behind him, flying westward. It was morning, but not yet sunrise. A gay little wind kept frisking

through the tree-tops, for I heard the leaves murmuring as if they, too, would praise.

I was glad that I had slept on hemlock boughs. A more luxurious couch might have caused me to oversleep, just when I wanted to drench my soul in this pearly sea of dawn.

I discovered that cows rise early. Over yonder in the field, I saw them forsaking recumbent positions to go quietly to grazing. Presently a horse got up and whinnied.

I rowed the boat farther toward the west side of the lake — in the direction of Mr. Spear's farm. It was growing harvest time and the wheat bent to the freshening wind. I watched those burnished fields until the sun rose and turned them

into seas of gold. How beautiful everything was, and so many women asleep missing it all! What a pity such happiness had only one onlooker!

I turned and rowed my boat hurriedly back to camp. My own husband was asleep and missing it all; but I tried in vain to arouse him: he only murmured uneasily that some one had "made pi of it;" and called for the printer's devil. How can an editor appreciate a sunrise when he is so troubled in his soul? I ceased to nudge him. "He looks pale," I thought; and I determined to have Pat bring down a mattress that very day, to place above the knotty hemlock boughs. If Max could not drink health and inspiration from the fount of morn, he should at least have a decent bed

to lie on. I kissed him and let him sleep.

When he awoke at eight o'clock, the fire was burning merrily in the stove; the table was laid and strewn with wild flowers; the aroma of coffee filled the air. Araminta and I were only waiting to serve the good breakfast cooked by the valuable and steadfast Rhoda. If I speak too often of my cook, it is because I so understand her value.

Max ran down to our little dock and dipped his head in the lake, shaking the shining drops from his hair, exactly as a shaggy dog shakes himself; then he returned happy and free from care. In the pleasant wood, with the sunshine falling chastely through the leaves and the cheerful birds singing all about us, we seated ourselves in our

rocking-chairs to partake of food. Behind us stood our little maid with kinky hair and star-bright eyes, waving her branch to keep off the insects.



THE CAMP BY THE LAKE XXI

TO-DAY Priscilla Brown came to visit me in her clumsy, flat-bottomed boat that is so hard to row. But she looked like a picture in her light gown and leghorn hat, weighted down with roses. Her cheeks were all aglow from the exertion of rowing.

She was greatly interested in our camp and I invited her to stay to supper. At precisely six o'clock came Araminta with the two baskets hanging from her slender arms.

We unpacked the good things, and I am proud to relate I served to Priscilla Brown, light biscuits, chicken croquettes and raspberries with cream; delicious little chocolate cakes and tea of my own brewing. The table was made gay with delicate ferns and bold black-eyed Susans. Priscilla said that it did not seem like camping out, where one always burned things in the cooking or else made them taste of smoke.

Max, who had spent a lazy day in his hammock and on the water, said that if it were not for his bed he should be quite content; and when a little later Pat appeared, staggering under the load of a mattress, which we laid upon the knotty hemlock boughs, which served as springs, he expressed

his entire satisfaction with camp life.

I wonder why it is that existence in the woods is such a panacea to mankind. It is not the quiet, for lo, when one stops to listen, there is busy life all about him. Through the long avenues of trees, the denizens of the wood ply their tasks. Some at night, others in broad daylight. Always, there is stir and labour; yet here is rest and wholesome living for man. Truly, old mother Nature calls him and nurtures him afresh amid her green trees.

The spirit of the woods fell upon Max. He ceased to worry about the sub-editor, and showed interest in affairs about him. We took long delightful rows upon the lake, nights and mornings. He fished

with the utmost patience, but rarely caught anything. Oh, it was a week of ideal happiness and it ended all too soon!

I should have been more than happy but for Araminta Sprangleberry. This dusky daughter of God was determined to follow me; I could not escape her. She liked camping, too; and I fear her Aunt Rhoda saw little of her recreant niece that week.

She was always hovering on the outskirts of the wood, waiting to dart in after me; and when I saw I could not elude her, I accepted her company with the spirit of a Christian. One morning I spied a scarlet tanager among the boughs of a scrub-oak. He looked like a ruby set amid emeralds, and I drew in my breath with delight. I listened

to hear him sing; but it was not the sweet melody of more modestly robed birds. He sang well enough for a scarlet tanager, that after all is fashioned but to shine before his fellow birds. I was very still, watching him intently, when Araminta happened along and scared him away. Another day, I was observing the wood-pewee, a very shy bird, when all was spoiled by Miss Sprangleberry twittering, "I'se found you, Missus."

How I did wish I might get lost from Araminta!

One day, as we sat upon opposite logs in the woods, she said: "Miss Judith, aren't you glad you'se ain't brack?"

I confessed I was glad.

"I'se don't like God one bit," said Araminta, "'cause he made me

brack. I'se don' wanter be no niggah."

"Araminta," I remarked, solemnly, "you can't help yourself; God doesn't ask us what we want to be; He just fashions us to suit Himself."

"Dat's true, Miss Judith," she returned; "but I'se jes' got a grudge 'gin God," and she dug her bare toes fiercely into a convenient mound of moss.

"Why, Araminta," I said reproachfully, "I thought you had religion?"

"Oh, I'se got 'ligion fast enuf, Miss Judith. I'se bin on de monah's binch. You see, I'se jes' got to hab 'ligion or de debbil'll kotch me."

Poor child! I did not know what to say to her. How could I com-

fort her from the great sense of wrong wrestling with her soul? Just then a couple of crows flew through the woods and alighted on a tree near by.

"Look, Araminta," I cried, "there are a couple of coloured individuals that do not object to being black!"

Araminta eyed the crows. The sun touching their glossy coats made them shine with an iridescent glitter that was truly dazzling. "Dey does look fine!" said the little darky.

As if in response to our admiration, the birds gave a couple of cheerful caws in their raucous voices. I like crows; they are so healthy and so openly wicked. Crows and gypsies are the frankest thieves alive.

"Araminta," I continued, "if you are black, you have a cheerful, shining face, and pleasant manners. I shouldn't worry about my colour; the crows don't."

"Jes' as you say, Missus," returned the exuberant child. She promptly rose from the log and ran to a little stream; waded in and jumped up and down, spattering the water about her until she looked like a dusky Undine. This over, she came back and danced and cut capers on the mound of moss before me, like a soulless thing. I watched her and laughed. What use to rebuke her? but presently I saw my chance. "Araminta," I said, "you must go home and change your frock. It is all spattered, you careless thing!"

She looked dismayed. "I don'

care nuffin 'bout my frock, Miss Judith."

"But I do; how can you bring our dinner, looking like a little fright? Mr. Max would not like it. Come, hurry home."

She saw I was in earnest and turned reluctantly, but came back: "Say, Miss Judith," she pleaded, "can't I jes' kiss de end ob your skirt ribband? I lubs you so!"

"You may kiss my hand, Araminta," I said; and the little moist red lips touched my palm and left a warm spot behind. Poor little Araminta! I wonder why I did not let her kiss my forehead; and yet, — well, is it not strange that a few shades of colour should so separate us?

She left me, and I wandered deeper into the woods, so content

to be alone. Alone, did I say? No; an inquisitive little gray rabbit peeped at me from under a clump of sweet fern, and a chipmunk near by flaunted his saucy tail, then sat upright on a fallen log, holding his little paws as if in mock courtesy. A black-and-white creeper climbing his spiral staircase around a tall chestnut tree attracted me; and once I saw a rare sight in these woods, a gorgeous red-headed woodpecker. I plucked a few stems of spotted pipsissewa and some ghostly Indian pipes, that grew where it was all moist and shady. By and by I went homeward and, to my surprise, found Max asleep in the hammock.

I awoke him and told him it was shameful so to waste the day; but he only smiled and said I could

enjoy enough for two; and I believe he is right.

Some people, I have heard, do not dare to enjoy themselves for fear of suffering. They argue, that one extreme follows another; and so they repress the natural well-springs of joy, only letting a little trickle forth now and then in a most cautious manner. If they find they are beginning to have a good time, they immediately turn their thoughts to the tomb or to something equally as solemn. For my part, when I think of the tomb, I always infer that I need a tonic or a brisk walk in the open air. The dear, faithful earth is surely planned for man's enjoyment; so why should one die a thousand deaths in anticipation, when just *one* will suffice? This is a sermon that costs

nothing, but is very profitable to the soul.

Speaking of sermons reminds me of Mr. Simmons. I coaxed Max to go with me that very afternoon to visit the "New Eden." He rebelled a little, for editors and ministers are not always congenial. However, I am of such a persistent nature that it is hard for Max to deny me. He declares that it is far easier to yield; so, presently, we were walking across the fields in the direction of the minister's home.

We found a little old-fashioned farmhouse, but very quaint and cozy inside. Mrs. Simmons is truly a genius. Her rooms are hung with chintz of dainty patterns; there are broad window-seats piled with silk pillows, and lamps with gorgeous shades standing on little tables.

She is a slight gray-haired lady, who looks up to her husband. Every time her brown eyes turn in his direction you feel, "Here is a match made in Heaven."

Max was very much taken with her; and as I was equally taken with the minister, we paired off and walked into the garden.

I was glad Mrs. Simmons was such a talker. When I heard her tell Max that her only brother was an editor, I knew the minister and I would be left to ourselves; and I did so want to ask him all about his garden.

He told me that he had tried Mr. Brown's bug-exterminator and that it had really worked well. To substantiate this statement, he triumphantly produced a tin can filled with potato bugs. "I thought I

would measure them," he said. "I have here a good quart; and yonder is my potato patch looking clean and trim."

I said it was certainly a most excellent machine; and that I should try mine the following week. "I should have tried it before," I confessed, "for Mr. Brown feels very delicate about the matter. He says he will not keep the money if the machine fails to work; and after my lying awake one whole night, planning how to get that money for him and thereby save the hens, why, it would never do to have it refunded. I lament," I continued, "that I have no potato patch. You see, I never dreamed that I should need to raise potato bugs. How little one knows what he will need! I planted marigolds

instead of tubers in my kitchen garden. I set the plants between the rows of cabbages, as I wished to see how they would look in the early fall — pretty goldenly, don't you think? Then, we haven't many bugs of any kind this year, owing to early industry on the part of Pat and myself: however, my neighbour, Mrs. Sullivan, has quite a sizable potato patch. I have thought of asking permission to gather her bugs; anyhow, I must do something before Priscilla Brown visits me again; for I have promised to send word to her father."

Mr. Simmons thought it would be just the plan to ask Mrs. Sullivan; and then we fell to discussing his garden. It is really a most satisfactory garden. There are high

brick walls on two sides of it, where Mr. Simmons is starting fruit-trees and vines. He already has a young apricot in process of training. He has built a fine grape arbour with seats running inside, and painted it green. How lovely it will be, when the vines have overgrown it, to sit and look up at the soft, white, velvety linings to the grape leaves! One part of the garden is terraced and made gay with narrow ribbon-beds of mixed flowers; but what surprised me most was a huge mound of earth, set exactly in the middle of a green lawn and entirely covered with moss pink, in full bloom. This mound looked so pretty that I asked Mr. Simmons how he came to think of such a charming idea.

He said it was not original on his

part; that there used to be just such a mound in his grandfather's garden in their old home in Virginia. "We children used to think there was an Indian buried in it, and once I started to dig it up, but did not get far when grandmother discovered me. I have always remembered that mound and wanted one just like it," he continued.

Mr. Simmons told me that he did not care for a garden that was dug up every spring and made over. He said he had invited his flowers to come and stay. He thought perhaps, he should purchase the place, and every year he desired his old friends to smile up at him from the brown earth; to whisper, "We are here again." "I like," he concluded, "sweet confusion, and not dull precision."

I pointed out to him an excellent spot for Madonna lilies and an equally good one for gladioli; I advised him to grow zinnias and to love them; "for," said I, "they are so hardy and gay that they bloom on when all the other flowers are gone." Then we picked out a shady spot for lilies-of-the-valley, and he showed me his white-lilac hedge.

I had never thought before of having a white-lilac hedge; but I could see it was a thing of beauty, greatly to be coveted. "Fortunately," I commented to myself, "white lilacs are not dear."

We talked so long that Max and Mrs. Simmons — they had quite exhausted the editor question — came to look for us, so the minister and I were forced reluctantly to part; but he followed us to the gate to

tell me of a certain plant that he had sent for. He promised, when it came, to divide the root with me.

We had gotten quite a piece off, when he called to me. I turned back while Max waited. The minister wanted to inquire if I owned a sun-dial.

"No," I said, "but I expect to own one," and I do. That very night I dreamed of white-lilac hedges and sun-dials.



XXII

MR. BROWN EXPERIMENTS WITH HIS AIR-SHIP

ALL the week, at spare times, Pat has been busy setting out a white-lilac hedge along the south side of my field. It is a poor time of year to plant a hedge; but the lilac is a hardy, indigenous creature that can be disturbed at any time, and I do so want this hedge to make some growth toward next year.

Aunt Matilda has sent me a hundred dollars with which to build that high board fence between the

field and the lane. Her terror concerning the bull is truly pathetic. I can almost feel sorry that I wrote to her about him. I hate to build the fence, for it will cut off such a pretty view of the fields and the woods beyond; still, I suppose I must do it. I was just thinking this over, when Pat came and told me that the bull was dead. They found the poor animal, he explained, in a little hollow with his leg broken. Nobody knows how he broke his leg; but Mr. Spear had to shoot him. Now Aunt Matilda need not longer worry. Of course, I must write at once and set her mind at ease.

"DEAR AUNT MATILDA:" I wrote; "You need no longer lie awake nights thinking about that bull.

The poor creature is dead and can harm no one.

"Mr. Spear, who owned him, is a friend of mine; and I have decided to ask him to change his pasture lot; then there will be no need to build the fence. I could not see the wheat-field or the woods beyond should I build it; and oh, Aunt Matilda, I do so enjoy a fine landscape. You ought to see the wheat-field; it is so golden just now, and every little wind tosses it like the waves of the ocean. Here is a sea of glory that will not drown you, but will by and by feed you with the staff of life.

"Shall I return the hundred dollars? Man needs but little here below, but truly, woman needs more, and a gardener can always use money to good advantage.

"I hope you are better of the gout, dear Aunt. I often think of you. How I wish you could hoe and dig as well as I can. Max and I have been camping for a whole week, just down by the lake. He needed a change. We should have gone farther away, but for the cooking. Max considered that so important. He dared not trust me to do it, for fear of slow starvation. Of course, I can cook; but I have no special talent for it as I have for gardening. Rhoda cooked our food for us at home — over our own cook-stove — and Araminta (the little girl I once wrote you about) brought it to us in baskets three times a day. Oh, Aunt Matilda, camping out is an ideal life. We are both, Max and I, as brown as a berry and fresh as a pippin. In

truth my health is so good that I continually thank God I am alive. Let me know at once, dear Aunt, about the check, for every day tempts me to spend it. I need so much. Your devoted niece,

"JUDITH."

After I had placed this letter in the little post-box by our gate, I walked on to Mrs. Sullivan's. She was at home, and when I asked the privilege of gathering a few of her potato bugs, the obliging woman kindly consented. Accordingly, that very afternoon, Pat carried over the machine: I went with him, and, surrounded by the whole Sullivan family, all in a gaping state of curiosity, I proceeded to pour some of the powerful chemical into the nozzle to the umbrella.

Then I screwed on the top and Pat began to push the machine slowly up and down the potato patch. He worked for an hour or more, but did not gather a single bug; and I was quite in despair, when — suddenly it occurred to me I had forgotten to press the little spring that Mr. Brown told me would open the valve in the machine. I pressed it, and to the great delight of Pat and myself, and the whole Sullivan family included, we began at once to gather a fine crop of bugs. I declared that I could not see why this wonderful and ingenious little machine had not already made Mr. Brown's fortune! We all know that potato bugs are plentiful.

Although the garden needed him sadly, I allowed Pat to clear the whole patch for Mrs. Sullivan. I

wanted to tell Priscilla Brown, with a clear conscience, that I had faithfully tried the machine; that it had proved more than satisfactory; and that Mr. Brown need no longer have qualms about keeping the money.

That afternoon, I drank two "cups o' tay" and ate two "biled eggs," just to please Mrs. Sullivan. I did not feel hungry in the least; but an Irishwoman's heart is so warm and her hospitality so great that one cannot refuse her.

Mrs. Sullivan's mother was feeling exceedingly smart. She wore her starched cap with a fluted ruffle to it, at least three inches wide, that made me think of a sunflower. She is past ninety, and her face is seamed with lines, but brighter eyes I never saw. She said our

machine was "a caution," and when we showed her the potato bugs it had gathered, she screamed: "Howly Mither! look at thim ugly divils!"

Max was quite interested in our bug-exterminator. He said "when he found time, he should like to examine it;" but in the meanwhile, I was besieged with enthusiastic neighbours, who borrowed the machine until the fluid was exhausted. When I sent to Mr. Brown's for more fluid, the most provoking thing happened. Belinda, by mistake, had burned up the formula; and Mr. Brown — though he sat for a straight hour racking his poor brain — could not recollect its one most important ingredient. Then I sent to Mr. Simmons; but unfortunately, he had not a drop of the

fluid left for us to analyze; so now we have two idle machines waiting for a lost thought. Mr. Brown assures us, that as soon as he has regulated and set in order some of the later ideas of his brain, he will be sure to find this lost ingredient — safely pigeon-holed. In the meantime, how potato bugs will multiply!

The other day Pat showed me a shaded corner of the garden, where he said maidenhair fern would grow. I delight in maidenhair fern, it is so green and delicate, and it mixes so deliciously with posies. I have always longed to grow it in my garden; but have esteemed it such a forest-loving creature, that I dared not transplant it. However, Pat thinks that by a little coaxing and yielding to certain con-

ditions of the soil, we may succeed. So my gardener and I, armed with baskets and two sharp trowels, set out for a wood across the lake, where maidenhair fern grows. Before leaving home we filled our baskets with flowers, as we expected to pass the poorhouse. Pat wanted to remember his old friend, Hetty Allen, who lives there, and I desired to pay a compliment to an ancient woman, who once "mistook" me for her long-lost daughter.

We found our friends well and at home, as usual. Mrs. Allen took her flowers and kissed them lovingly, but did not remember the giver. Poor soul, her mind seems quite gone; but she still preserves a love for the blessed flowers. The other woman was not so pleased.

She said flowers were well enough, but victuals were more to her notion. Next time I shall take her a pastry and keep my blooms.

We found the ferns, but they were hard to dig. It seemed as if they really resisted being torn from their woodland home. I could not blame them, for it was a lovely spot. At our right a road wound through the wood, and on our left gurgled a little sylvan stream. Pat thought he had better dig the ferns; so, after a few refractory struggles, I desisted and proceeded to enjoy myself.

It took him a long time, and it was growing a trifle dusky when, on our way home, we reached Mr. Brown's domain. A little way back, I had stopped to watch a couple of flickers at play around the foot of

a tall chestnut tree. They darted here and there, showing the golden linings to their wings and that bright splash of scarlet at the back of each head. Such fun as they were having! It was so interesting to watch them; but at last I tore myself away, for I remembered that Pat wanted to water the garden. As we climbed the fence into Mr. Brown's large field, we were not prepared for the sight that greeted us.

Pat saw it first.

"Begorra," he cried; "look, look o' thar, Missus!"

I gazed upward and beheld a little distance above us, slowly sailing through the air, a huge balloon-like thing with a pair of flapping black wings. It resembled a bird of ill omen taking its laborious

flight. My heart seemed to stand still; for I knew at once it was Mr. Brown's aeroplane.

Pat grew quite excited. "Be jabers," he cried, "'tis the ould gintleman and his flyin'-machine!"

A long thin face, topped by a rusty silk hat, looked down at us from a framework of wicker. Truly, in triumph, Mr. Brown was sailing around his own lot. He rose higher and higher.

Pat threw up his hat and yelled with all his might. This little old Irishman was growing so exuberant that I began to fear for him. "Hoigh thar, hoigh thar," he screamed; "go it, Misther Brown, go it!"

There was no response. Mr. Brown was apparently very busy with his machine. Something

seemed to trouble him. He leaned far out and caught at a dangling rope, but missed it. I heard an ominous crack; then the airship began to fall rapidly. It was a moment of fearful suspense.

Pat and I ran toward that end of the field. Surely, Mr. Brown had lost control of it, for the huge affair wobbled fearfully, and was descending directly over a stone-pile. It came down with a thump. There was a splintering crash and then a groan. We ran the faster, only to find Mr. Brown, in a fearful tangle, lying unconscious upon the heap of stones.

"Be jabers, the ould gintleman has lighted!" cried Pat; but he was very tender as he extricated the unconscious man and with my help lifted him from the stones and laid

him upon the soft grass. I ran to a near-by stream for water (carrying it in my straw hat), which I dashed in Mr. Brown's face and presently he revived.

"Is the machine injured?" he inquired, faintly.

"'Tis in sphlinters," said Pat, truthfully; "but be jabers, Misther Brown, 'tis glad ye ought to be thot ye are not kilt, intoirely. Pwhat sot ye up to fly? 'Twor the network pwhat saved ye."

The poor old gentleman tried to rise, but sank back with a groan.

"It was going beautifully," he said, "when something snapped. I fear I have broken my leg."

I stayed with Mr. Brown and fanned him with my hat, while Pat hurried to the house for help. Presently Priscilla came running across

the fields like mad — poor child, she was wild with terror.

"Oh, he is not dead, Mrs. Elliot!" she cried. "I could not bear it!"

I smiled reassuringly. "No, indeed, he is not dead. He has only broken his leg."

She was beside her father, the young face close to his. "Oh, father, father, speak to me!" she cried.

Mr. Brown opened his eyes and said faintly: "Don't take on so, Priscilla. I am not badly hurt; it is nothing but my leg."

"But, father," she exclaimed reproachfully, "why did you not tell me you were going to try the airship? I would have gone with you."

"That was just the reason," re-

plied Mr. Brown, "I did not tell you. I did not wish you to accompany me, Priscilla."

The poor child silently wrung her hands, and partly to quiet her, I bade her go for more water. I saw that Mr. Brown was growing faint again.

By the time she was back, Pat and Belinda had arrived, bearing a mattress between them. We laid Mr. Brown upon it, and by each taking hold of a corner we managed with much hard work to bear him safely to the house. He groaned all the way, and poor Priscilla's tears fell like rain.

The doctor found that Mr. Brown had fractured his hip. He told me it would be many months before the unfortunate gentleman could hope to walk again; perhaps never.

Pat, with the help of a neighbour, gathered up the broken aeroplane and piled it on the bench in the orchid house, its battered and splintered wings topping the debris.

Lying helpless in his bed, during intervals from pain, Mr. Brown built airy castles of how he should one day repair the machine and fly forth in triumph.

You may say what you please, but it is a good thing to build air-castles; it keeps one's mind occupied, and lifts him above the sordid things of earth.



I AM THANKFUL FOR A CIRCUS XXIII

BRIGHT and early this morning I was out among my Madonna lilies. Who would not rise early when such a sight is awaiting her? There they stand, rank on rank, pure and sweet beyond comparison. They remind me of the hedge in the spiritual garden of my friend. I suppose her lilies are finer than mine; for spiritual things, Mr. Pegleg taught me, are real and far beyond the material. He said, that while I can enjoy

flowers here, I shall enjoy them a thousand times more in the next life. Oh, what a good time I shall have! for it does seem that I could never be happier than I am this morning — here, among my own earthly lilies. I smell their delightful fragrance, and am so glad that I planted them in pure faith. The garden was not mine at the time, and I did not know that I should ever own it; but did this deter me from placing in the dark earth those wonderful bulbs that now bloom to pleasure me? When my husband would have dissuaded, I was firm. Surely it is lack of faith that makes us lose so many good things in life.

I was still among my lilies when Araminta Sprangleberry brought me two letters which she had found in the post-box. One was from

dear Aunt Matilda, expressing her joy over the death of the bull and saying that I should keep the hundred dollars. I do hope her gout is not worse, she seems so sweet and generous. The other letter was from Donald Warren. He said he was delighted to hear how fast the scarlet creepers had grown; and that he hoped soon to pay me the promised visit.

I lingered a little longer in the lily patch, then went to view my morning-glories. Did you ever have an old building covered with morning-glories, and get up some morning to behold thousands of brightly tinted blooms shining in the sun? It is a sight! I don't see how one can live without a garden and morning-glories.

I do not feel just the same toward

the morning-glories as I do toward the lilies. I reverence the lilies; but I revel in the morning-glories. Their gayety excites me. I feel like a primitive Methodist; I want to shout. After I had looked my fill I went to the sweet-pease patch. Sweet pease are undoubtedly the most satisfactory flowers grown. Mine have been unusually fine this year. Every day I pick and pick them; and the next morning, lo, hundreds of little airships, anchored to green tendrils, are ready to greet me. They must come out in the night. I find the hollyhocks with bees buzzing in their silken frocks. How tall they are grown; and oh, how rich the colours, from deepest, darkest crimson to faintest pink, vivid scarlet, creamy yellow and pure white! I must extend my

hedge of hollyhocks; for who can have enough of these rich, old-fashioned flowers? Yonder, is my bed of golden stock, a cheerful blaze glowing in the sun; and a little farther on is the tinted stock. I love stock, and I love larkspur, too; and, yes, even cockscomb, though this last is so bold and flaunting, without a particle of grace. I love it for its gorgeous velvety crimson, that reminds me of a king's royal robe. Prince's feather is not so bad.

By and by I come to the old-fashioned garden. Here the sweet-williams are still in bloom (rather late this year, owing to the planting), gay courtiers in the realm of flowers. Grandmother loved sweet-williams. I pick a bunch of them to put in my basket; then I pause

to look down the straight borders of box. I am thinking of a sun-dial. It must be in the old-fashioned garden, to be sure, and on that stretch of open lawn where the sun can spy it all day long. I shall plant a crimson rose to twine about the grayness of its stone pedestal. How I need a sun-dial; I wonder that I have lived so long without one! But how much will a sun-dial cost?

I remember the hundred dollars that my blessed Aunt Matilda has forced me to accept. Why not gratify this heart's desire? Still, there are reasons: the Browns will have a frightful doctor's bill to pay. The hens must do their best; and even then, I doubt their ability to lay eggs enough to liquidate it. I sat down on the grass to make a

few mental calculations: if the doctor came so many times and received so much a visit, and the hens laid so many eggs at so much a dozen, — how much? — here I got tangled and had to begin over again. I do wish I had paid more attention to the science of mathematics while in school.

I was struggling hard, when I looked up and beheld my little neighbour; she who mixes molasses and soda and takes it for cod-liver oil. She had on a pretty pink print dress and her brown eyes were shining. "Tell me," I cried, "how many eggs can a hen lay in a week?"

"Seven," she replied, "providing she does not observe Sunday."

"Belinda has a hundred hens," I exclaimed with satisfaction; "that

makes seven hundred eggs a week. It should do it."

"But hens don't lay an egg every day," she remarked.

"They ought to," I said reproachfully. "It's their business;" then I realized that I had not greeted her. The problem could wait.

"Oh," I said joyfully, "I am so glad to see you. How pretty your frock is! Why, you are as gay as my posies."

"Am I?" she said smiling. "Well, I feel gay. For one day a great load is off my mind. I shall not have to cook. There is a circus at Zanesville; my husband has gone and taken all the children."

"The Lord is merciful," I cried. "You shall stay with me. We will put in such a day!"

"I want to see the lilies first," she said.

"Come along, dear;" and we went down the path toward the lilies. When I saw her walking among them I could not hide my tears. She put her face close to their white cups, and I know she blessed them. Suddenly she turned and looked at me. "What are you crying about?" she asked.

I did not answer her but ran away. I am not usually so foolish, but this time I hid myself behind a great clump of golden-glows and had it out. If you ever feel a lump in your throat, why, just go and look at something yellow; for yellow is a very material colour and it resembles good healthy sunshine.

Soon I dried my tears by consoling myself in this fashion: What

was to hinder me from buying a quantity of bulbs and making just such a lily patch for my little neighbour? I knew a real nice spot in her garden suitable for it. What would she say when she had lilies of her own? I revelled in the thought. As for the Browns' doctor bill — well, I must pray that the hens grow prolific, and to help the matter along, send Belinda all my dried sunflower seeds. Surely, I had read that a diet of sunflower seeds persuaded hens to lay.

When I returned to my visitor my face was smiling and I carried a great cluster of golden-glows.

"Here's gold for you!" I cried; then ran into the house to Rhoda.

"Rhoda," I said, "I have company, and I want you to get up the best luncheon you can think of.

Set the table under the honeysuckle on the porch and fix it up fine. You know how, Rhoda."

My cook smiled, displaying her white, white teeth, and behind her stood Araminta showing an equally immaculate set of ivories.

"I'll jes' do my best, Missus," said Rhoda, and I knew what that meant.

"Do you believe in good angels?" I asked my neighbour a little later.

"I am afraid not," she said sadly.

"Oh, but you ought to," I continued. "Why not believe in good? I know you believe in evil."

"Who can help but believe in evil?" she sighed.

"You can," I remarked, stoutly. "There is just as much good in the world as there is evil; more, I

think. Now, if you believed in the good as steadfastly as you do in the evil, why things would get better. I truly trust in good angels. I can feel them all around me, helping me out of every difficulty. They would go away if I did not trust them. I wish you wouldn't look so sad when you see my flowers. They do not bloom to make one weep; but to make one glad — from the very crown of his head to the soles of his feet."

She sighed. "They do make me glad, and yet — "

"I know," I said, "you have had a hard life."

My little neighbour looked away for a moment, then she turned her eyes toward me.

"I am going to confess to you," she said. "Do you know that I am

a wretched coward? I am afraid of everything in this world. I'm afraid of sickness; I'm afraid of accidents; I'm afraid of death; I'm afraid of tramps. Every time the door-bell rings I'm afraid it's a telegram telling me some of my friends are dead. If my husband does not return home from the field the moment I think he ought to, I'm afraid something dreadful has happened to him. I'm afraid the children will fall down the well, or a haystack tumble on them, or a mad dog will bite them. I am afraid to have them swim and I am afraid to have them skate, for the same reason. I'm afraid of guns. I never pass my husband's rifle in its rack in the hall, but I shiver all over. I am a perfect bundle of fears; and I worry day and night. I ought to be ashamed

to confess myself such a weak, good-for-nothing creature; but I know you will not laugh at me. Oh, how I do wish I could trust God and have a little peace!"

All her pretty brightness had passed away; she looked dreadfully careworn.

It has been said that one might as well bid the wind not to blow as to ask a woman to stop worrying; and when one has six children, and a husband who is "a little near," as Peggotty declared her husband to be in "David Copperfield," what advice can one give?

I hate advice; it is a mixed-up dose that no one likes. There is such a pinch of self-assurance in it, that while it makes the giver feel very virtuous, it has exactly the opposite effect upon the taker.

My friend plucked my sleeve. "What can I do?" she asked, in almost childlike eagerness.

"Oh," I replied, "if I were in your place I should take a bigger dose of the garden. I should consider my nerves in such a state that I could afford to wink a little at household disorder. I should be very vigorous with the hoe and the rake, and rather weakly with the broom and the mop. One can't worry much in a garden; for our green babies are so comforting. What you need, my poor little worn-out friend, is a lily patch, and you are going to have one. Come now, we have just time before luncheon to walk up to that graveyard yonder. I want to see if the wild rose that I planted on Mr. Pegleg's grave needs water. I will take

a pail along, as there is a spring in the lane."

It was one of those glorious, breezy days, when the wind whips your hair and tingles on your cheeks. We climbed the fence into my field, and of course I had to explain to my little neighbour just how I intended to glorify this spot of earth. She seemed very much interested, which was truly pleasing to a garden woman.

I love the peace of a little country graveyard. "Lonely," did you say? Why, who can be lonely where there are trees and grass and birds and sunshine?

The wild rose needed water, as it had not rained for several days. I fetched two pailfuls from the spring and emptied them gently about the roots. I know the rose

felt refreshed. Then we sat down beside the grave.

"You loved your friend very much?" said my neighbour.

"Oh, yes," I replied, "and I am just thinking how he is enjoying himself."

"What do you suppose he is doing?" she asked.

"Why, making a splendid garden, to be sure. He loved flowers here and of course he loves them there. He once promised to lay out a beautiful violet bed for me, when he passed over; but I told him not to be in any hurry about it, for I was well satisfied with this earth. Mr. Pegleg was not afraid to die; he was not afraid of anything."

"I wonder why not?" she said.

"Because," I replied, "he truly believed in another world. He

didn't just think there might be one, he ***knew*** it. Too many of us think there may be a God and there may be another world — we are not at all sure; but Mr. Pegleg was settled in his faith, and he declared there was a law by which one might prove this blessedness of a life beyond.

"He thought we have a right to happiness and joy, even on this earth. Oh, how he glorified life — my dear old friend! I wish he could have told you about the borderland, where our friends (that have passed over) wait to welcome us. He said it is not so far away.

"He never spoke of death as going down to the grave, but rather as going up to the grave; and listen, dear, Mr. Pegleg had a little sweetheart who died years and years ago.

Do you know," I bent close to her and spoke low, "he saw her wandering among my roses a week before he died. I feel that she came with the angel of death and led him away. Now, little neighbour, if there is another world not so far off, blessed and sweet, awaiting us, why so afraid of transition? If good spirits return to earth, why cannot they guard and keep us? Only, we must learn to trust them a little.

"So many people scoff at Mr. Pegleg's belief; but I — I have found it very sweet and more comforting than all the unbeliefs in the world. I am going to try to live up to it. It does not fret me to look at this long, narrow grave, for I know my friend is not there."

"How I wish I could believe that

God really loves *me*," said my little neighbour.

"If you cannot believe that God loves you," I said, "why, just believe there is some one over in the border-land that loves you. Have you no friend there?"

"My father," she said, simply.

"Then every day think of him. Believe that he can come to you and protect you. Let go a little of worry and fear; remember your garden. Now it is time to go home."

Rhoda is a born artist as well as a cook. The table was exquisite — laid with a snowy cloth and strewn with clove pinks of every shade and spicy as the island of Ceylon. She served us with clear soup, fragrant as the mint bed; chicken croquettes and creamed potatoes. A cucumber

salad garnished with spicy nasturtium seeds and a syllabub (this last was Rhoda's triumph); then little squares of cocoanut cake with red raspberries and cream. My dear cook! I must feel her pulse often, for how much her health means to me! I wished, as we sat there, that my little neighbour might have such dainty food served to her every day. As I gazed at her thin, flower-like face, I thought how beautiful she might become if she only dared to enjoy herself. How lovely it would be if some fairy prince should suddenly endow her with faith in good angels: then unseen doors would open to her; her burdens would drop away; her life become glorified. It is too bad that so many women are slaves to their environments.

I whispered to Araminta Sprangleberry to fetch my friend's dish that I might heap it again with red raspberries. These red raspberries picked at dawn, how fresh and plump they are! Every berry seems to stand by itself, helping to form a little crimson pyramid over which I dust snowy sugar and pour good, rich Jersey cream. It is a pity everybody cannot live in the country at least once in his life, if only to taste red raspberries, picked at dawn. Araminta is very nimble in waiting at table; so much her aunt has taught her. Now, if that aunt could only teach her not to stand on her head; not to pull up the radishes and the little onions; not to make up sly faces at Pat; not to torment my poor rooster and his hen; why then, I should have hopes

of her. She might in time become a very satisfactory servant.

About six o'clock the circus-going people began to return. Mr. Floyd, my friend's husband, drove by with six children, looking fagged and cross. My little neighbour did not happen to see him, as she was engaged in peeking at the bird house and listening to the song of that indefatigable Jenny Wren. I said nothing, for I thought Mr. Floyd would not be the worse for a little discipline. It would do him good to feel a little wholesome loneliness for his spouse. When, presently, she insisted upon going home, I remembered that I had not picked her any flowers. I found the biggest basket the house afforded and insisted upon filling it; then I suggested that I row her across the

lake. "It is easier than walking home by the road," I said.

She demurred, but her eyes were shining when I half pushed her into the boat. It was a still evening on the lake. We rowed across a perfect mirror whose surface had become invisible; our light bark seemed poised between two worlds. A wood-thrush was chanting his angelic song in the edge of the grove. As he suddenly flew away I caught his moving shadow in the water. It was as if I beheld his spirit. It took me a long time to cross the lake. I was in no hurry and I knew it would do my friend good to sit still and drink in the glory of God. I hoped by the time she reached home, Mr. Floyd would have the supper over and the six children put to bed. I could im-

agine his temper, but that did not disturb me.

At last we reached the landing and I kissed her good night.

"Oh," she cried, "I have had such a day!"

"I thank God," I said, "for that circus!"



I FALL ASLEEP AND REGRET IT XXIV

WHY say there are no good things in life? Of course there are no good things for people who will not see them or search for them. The great faithful earth is a good gift to every soul who has eyes and ears to appreciate it. Man is the only creature that really shows discontent and rails against his creator.

Some Sundays I prefer to go to church out-of-doors, when the sky is turquoise blue and the clouds like

great banks of snow; when the leaves of the beech are so divinely green, and my lady, White Birch, gleams across the lake from the edge of the wood. If it is not too hot, there is generally a concert in the grove. It was just such a Sunday morning when I started forth to hear Mr. Simmons preach. It is nearer to row across the lake. Max was stretched lazily in the hammock and could not be persuaded. He is such a cheerful, irresponsible sinner that I gave him up and started alone. When I got out on the lake, it occurred to me that I would not go to church, either. Of course I knew I ought to go, and that my soul needed looking after; but it was such a joyous, glorious day that I could not bear the thought of four walls.

So I stayed out and did a very wrong thing. I rowed about the lake for a long time, peeping into every little cove. Once, I started up a company of tip-ups; and again I disturbed the pious meditations of a crane. He dropped his other leg and quickly vanished in the reeds. I watched some water-skaters that had no respect for the Sabbath; and some beetles that appeared to be dancing the lancers. I rowed to the cranberry bay and picked a few late blossoms. When the concert in the grove began I slipped into the warm brown shadow — cast by a tall buttonwood — and listened.

It was a fine concert. Brown thrashers and wood-thrushes, catbirds and robins, orioles and warblers, all seemed to take part. I suppose each one was singing his

own hymn; but somehow it all blended together into one glorious paean of praise.

In slight pauses in the music, the bobolink's cheerful strain came from the fields, mingled with the long, sweet notes of the meadow-lark; and once, a loon laughed rudely, as if in wild derision.

When the concert was all over I rowed out into the middle of the lake. Here I shipped my oars, for a great desire had come to me to lie down in the bottom of the boat and gaze up into the deep blue sky. I carefully slid back the middle seat, and taking my light coat for a pillow proceeded to make myself very comfortable. Did you ever try it? Oh, how blue the sky was and how diaphanous! One could look into the depths for miles.

There was a great bank of idle clouds that floated so lazily across the zenith. Would it ever get anywhere, I wondered. I watched and watched it, until my eyelids quivered and finally closed, — I slept.

I dare not say how long I slept, for I have a good conscience and am not easily awakened. I was just indulging in a beautiful dream, when I felt a hand on my boat and heard a voice crying, "Thank God she's here!"

I opened my eyes and saw Max. His face was white from fear; then I raised up and discovered that he was seated in Mr. Spear's boat. Mr. Spear was rowing.

"Judith Elliot!" exclaimed my husband; then he remembered our neighbour. "If you will row up

a trifle closer, Mr. Spear, I will step into my wife's boat. Now that she is safe I need not trouble you any longer. I feel greatly obliged to you."

"Ye're welcome," said Mr. Spear, "an' I'm mighty glad Mrs. Elliot ain't drownded arter all."

"Who thought I was drowned?" I asked.

"I," replied Max sternly. "It was long past church time and you did not come home; then I discovered the boat, apparently empty, in the middle of the lake. What else was I to think?"

I made no reply. It was one of those times when silence is golden. Mr. Spear rowed away and then the storm broke.

"I say, Judith Elliot," cried my husband, "you are the most exas-

perating creature alive! Oh, if you had been drowned! I shudder to think of it. You appear to be wholly irresponsible. The fear you have caused me! Have you no heart — no thought for others? What if I had lost you!"

"But you have not lost me," I said, cheerfully. "I know it was a shame, and I am so sorry that I fell asleep; but you see, well, it just happened so."

"Happened so," sneered my husband. "You never thought of *me*."

"No, dear," I said truthfully, "I was thinking of the sky and how beautiful the world is; how gently my boat rocked; and then, — but why say more? I really didn't intend to sleep more than a couple of minutes."

"And extended the time to two

hours," groaned Max. "Oh, Judith, Judith!"

I cannot tell which was the stronger desire in my husband's breast, to fold me in his arms in a thankful embrace, or to give me a good shaking. I knew I deserved the shaking; but I thought of Mr. Pegleg's words: "Always meet petulance with kindness," and tried to divert Max. I pointed out to him how handsome the bole to yonder beech-tree looked; what a delicate flavour of green was blended into the soft grays. I showed him a solitary white birch standing like a delicate lady at the edge of the wood; but he would not be beguiled, and I began to feel my disgrace.

At last he spoke: "If I live until to-morrow I shall buy another boat,

then I can come after you. I had to run a mile to find Mr. Spear."

"Poor boy," I said tenderly; still I felt a little uneasy about that boat; then it would be so handy for Max to find me if company came that I did not care to see; or if he thought I was watching a sunset too long.

"It will cost a good deal of money," I demurred.

"I don't care," he said savagely. "You have got to be looked after."

"Do you really love me, Max?" I asked softly.

"Love you?" he cried, "you are my heart's desire! Oh, Judith, I could not live without you."

"And still, it is so difficult to live with me," I remarked musingly.

He helped me from the boat to our landing; then caught me to his

heart. I am sure he felt very grateful that I was spared to him. Is it not strange, one so values a treasure the moment he fears he has lost it? I felt that, though Max should still harbour anger in his heart toward me, a sweet reconciliation was not far off.

I ran into the house, up to my room, and donned my most fetching gown, a white mull. I pinned at my breast some pale pink roses, and fastened one in the puff to my hair. I was not ill-looking, I saw for myself. I was of a wholesome brown shade, and health shone in my eyes and reddened my cheeks. I looked the out-of-door creature that I am, no better and no worse, a sort of kin to a hardy shrub.

I went down to our Sunday dinner, and tried to be agreeable. I

inquired of Max, if he had had any abnormal vegetables to report lately, — such as the biggest beet or a mammoth head of cabbage. I told him that Pat was raising a very reputable squash which he intended weighing in the fall; but Max remained silent, and I was almost afraid of an attack of dyspepsia from general low spirits.

After dinner Mr. and Mrs. Simmons came to call on us. They said that they were walking and had strolled so far in our direction, that it seemed a pity not to take a peep into my "earthly paradise." Max brightened when we saw Mrs. Simmons. I knew they would renew their talk concerning editors and it pleased me to think it; for I wanted to confess to the minister. A few minutes later, I had

beguiled him to one side, ostensibly to look at my larkspur, but really to tell him the reason I was not at church that morning. I owned that I had wickedly frightened my husband.

He laughed. I think he is the most unministerial minister I ever met.

"I can sympathize with you," he said. "When I was a small boy I used to run away from school. I could not see the use of poring over books, just to learn about people that were dead and gone; and I could not see what difference it made if a word were now and then misspelled; but I did want to know the woods and to revel in the carnivals of nature. The great wholesome out-of-doors called to me with a hundred alluring voices; and I

responded, in spite of the stout birch stick that hung above the teacher's desk.

"One day I found an old log punt near the edge of a pond. No one seemed to own it; I imagined it belonged to the pond, so I rowed out in it. Then I did just what you did; I lay down in the bottom of my rude craft to watch the sky, and fell asleep.

"My father and a few frantic neighbours found me. No one understood my sympathy with nature, so I got flogged twice; first by my irate father, and again by the stern old schoolmaster.

"Did it teach me a lesson? No; I am just as foolish yet, — just as fond of nature. You can't flog that love out of any human creature."

It made me feel very happy to

think the minister did not condemn me. I grew quite cheerful, and showed him my poppy garden. Is there anything in the world more silken and beautiful than a poppy on its gray green stem? "Joan Silver Pin" was a queer name given it in Queen Elizabeth's time; and I imagine it was so called because when its silken drapery falls there is the stout silvery knub left, and long stem. Poppies are not flowers to pick; they are to look at, to dream over. Every shade was here, from darkest red to snowy white, that wonderful white in which blue shadows lurk. I love poppies and so does the minister.

"Do you remember," he asked, "that sweet little cradle song by Eugene Field? This is the first verse:

"'The Rock-a-by Lady from Hush-a-by Street
Comes stealing; comes creeping;
The poppies they hang from her head to her feet,
And each hath a dream that is tiny and fleet —
She bringeth her poppies to you, my sweet,
When she findeth you sleeping.'"

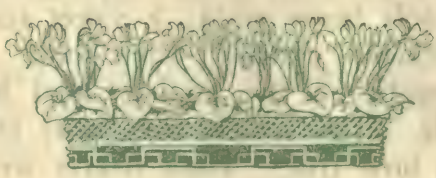
"Ah, yes," I replied; "and it makes one sleepy just to hear it."

Our guests lingered until dusk; then set out across the fields for home. I watched them; he so tall and stately, she so slight and fragile. Presently his arm stole protectingly around her. Above them, birds were flying on eager wings to soft home nests; a sweet contentment claimed the land. I thought on the minister and his wife. How simple they were and yet how true! Their hearts were

free from envy and malice; they coveted not, but rejoiced in love. Oh, how much to be desired is such a life! Its ways are ways of pleasantness; its paths are paths of peace.

The moonlight was flooding us when we turned toward the garden.

Max would not go far. He drew me into the little summer-house built just for two. Here, sitting close together on the wooden bench, gazing through the archway at the now vague colours of the poppy bed, a sweet reconciliation was encompassed.



THE PROPOSAL IN MY SUMMER-HOUSE

XXV

MR. BROWN is somewhat improved. For weeks he has lain helpless, but now he can be raised in bed. Belinda tends him afternoons, while her mistress takes the air.

I often join Priscilla Brown in her walks. We have grown to be great friends. The girl has opened her heart to me, and as I gaze into its virgin depths, I discover that there is hope for Donald Warren.

To-morrow, this plant-loving

young man comes to visit me. He has been delayed by the death of an uncle, and the scarlet creepers have long since done their duty in covering the little summer-house. I have secret plans in regard to his visit.

Priscilla and I have talked over her father's misfortune. Viewed in some lights, it appears like a special "stroke of Providence;" for, as Priscilla puts it, if he had not fractured his hip, he would surely have flown again; and his daughter and I have little faith in air-ships. A second fall might end the career of Mr. Brown. Now the doctor thinks he will get well, but he must always walk with a crutch. "Father is so secretive!" moans Priscilla. "Had I known, I should have attempted the flight with him."

I am very glad she did not know, for I shudder to think of this delicate, beautiful creature as maimed.

Expecting Mr. Warren to-morrow, I have business to attend to to-day. The Browns' hens have proved good and faithful servants in the matter of laying. Belinda thinks their industry is due to the dried sunflower seeds I sent her; but I consider it a direct answer to prayer. I so desired them to lay that I was not above praying for it. Now that I am a little relieved in regard to the doctor's bill, I shall purchase the bulbs for my neighbour's lily patch. I drive into town with Max, who sets me down, rather reluctantly, before my pet florist's. I do believe my husband thinks it is dangerous to allow me in a flower-shop.

I receive a warm greeting from Mr. Gerome. That affable man declares he has missed me; and when I make known my errand in regard to the bulbs, he asserts that I shall have the very finest his nursery affords; that he will pick them out himself and see that they are delivered to me the third week in September, exactly the right time for planting lily bulbs. I should have left him then, but he invited me to inspect the greenhouses; and, — well — when the ten o'clock stage stopped to take me home, a fat woman in the back seat grumbled because I had to set a large flower-pot holding a fine gloxinia beside her. How could I help it when I had three other pots containing plants on the seat beside me and a big double fuchsia in my lap? I

could see that the fat woman lacked a soul for flowers. All these possessions had cost me dear; and when I reflected, I discovered I was not at all in need of a fuchsia, but it did have such fine double blooms! How could I resist it? As for the gloxinia and the other plants, I should make use of them. Mrs. Sullivan's mother would be ninety-one next week, and for a birthday gift I would send her the gloxinia. How lucky that I thought to purchase it! But now the fat woman was nodding — suppose she should fall on it and break it? I poked her with my parasol to awaken her. She looked up and frowned at me; but I smiled back so affably, that she forgot herself and began to talk. I learned that she was a lecturer on female suffrage and that

her home was in Kansas. She had come East to visit her sister, who lived in Zanesville, a little town on the stage-coach route. When she learned that I also believed women should have some rights, she became so interesting that I really grieved to part with her. When I was set down at my own gate, she insisted upon handing out the gloxinia, and she bade me good-bye in a feeling manner.

Next day Mr. Warren arrived. His eyes were shining and there was such a look of prosperity about him that I knew at once something delightful had happened. Nor was I mistaken. After we had walked all through the garden and he had set out a plant — one he had fetched as a present to me — we sat down to rest beneath the morn-

ing-glories. Here he told me the good news.

The relative of whose death he had written me had bequeathed him a hundred thousand dollars. "My uncle's home was in California," said Mr. Warren, "and I knew little about him, only that he was a bachelor and was very rich. He was much older than my father, and he lived to the great age of ninety. He left the same amount to my two sisters."

"When one lives to be ninety," I remarked, "he ought not to object to transition. Your uncle did well to leave you this money. I can't tell you how glad I am."

"I knew you would be pleased," he said, eagerly; "and now —"

"What is there to hinder?" I asked.

"Nothing, I hope. When I was getting but twelve hundred a year, it seemed impossible for me to marry and take upon my hands a family; now it is different."

Then I told him of the accident that had befallen Mr. Brown.

"If she consents," he said earnestly, "that poor old gentleman shall always have a home with us."

"And Belinda, too," I added.

He looked doubtful.

"It would be quite unwise to leave a good cook behind," I said earnestly. "Let nothing tempt you to desert Belinda, for I have tasted her wares."

He laughed. "You set great store by cooks."

"Who does not?" I returned. "Belinda's price is above rubies.

If she is not a thing of beauty, she is yet a joy for ever. What shall you do with the hens?"

"I draw the line at the hens," he said.

Presently he laughed uneasily. "What plans you are laying! Perhaps she will not accept me; I am so unworthy of her."

I did not reply, for I was thinking deeply. Priscilla did not know of Mr. Warren's arrival (I had kept it a secret), and that afternoon she had promised to visit me. Could I not entice her into the summer-house, then leave her to Fate? I told Donald Warren my plan and he heartily approved of it.

By common consent we avoided saying anything more about Priscilla. At luncheon we drifted into a delightful talk concerning sun-

dials. Mr. Warren had seen, in an old garden at Cambridge, just such a sun-dial as I needed. He said it was the dearest old garden! High brick walls enclosed three sides of it, and here the flowers came so early in spring, dainty crocuses, hyacinths and jonquils — those sweet-smelling white ones with little orange eyes — and daffodils and violets. It was a friendly old garden and clung to its favourites year after year. In a wide grassy space stood the sun-dial of gray stone with red roses clambering around it. It was quite ancient; it had marked the hours of many a life from toddling infancy to old age. Now, it was crumbling a little under the touch of time, and there was a romantic legend concerning it:

Often, on bright moonlight nights, the occupants of the place used to declare they could see a woman standing in the garden by the sun-dial, a beautiful young woman, with a pure oval face and a great wealth of golden hair. She always wore a gown of creamy satin, and about her white neck were ropes of gleaming pearls. Nestling against her bosom was a freshly plucked red rose. She seemed to be waiting for some one who never came. Let us trust that it was because he could not.

At least a pretty story. I called her "the lady of the sun-dial," this sweet old ghost haunting a well-loved garden. "Perhaps," I told Mr. Warren, "I shall come back to this garden of mine. Future occupants may look forth and behold an

interesting ghost hoeing the sweet pease or weeding the pansies. I know I shall come back, if there are no gardens in heaven. My heaven in that case would be here."

It was getting a little late and I advised my friend to take a walk. I felt sure that I should soon behold Priscilla Brown coming up the path. If she discovered Mr. Warren, why, all might be lost.

He said he would stroll through my field, and I watched him depart with a good deal of satisfaction. Very soon Priscilla appeared. Poor girl, the visit was a wholesome change to her, from the almost constant attendance at the sick-bed. She was looking a trifle pale, but adorable. I thought I knew all her frocks; yet to-day, this pale blue tissue seemed so unfamiliar, and so

did the white mull fichu with its edging of spidery lace. Priscilla must have dived deeply into the cedar chest containing her mother's wardrobe. On her way she had picked a few sprigs of lobelia, and its scarlet glow shone out from the pale blue frock like a jaunty fire. Had dreams of conquest flitted through her maiden's brain, she could not have arrayed herself more charmingly.

"Oh, I am so glad to see you!" I exclaimed. "Is it not warm? Come, let us sit in the summer-house. The scarlet creepers quite shade it now, and that little bench will just hold us two. There we can watch the poppies and listen to Jenny Wren's chatter. You know she rents my bird-house at the top of the poles."

Priscilla opened a large white fan which emitted a faint, delicious perfume, and waved it back and forth. "It is so warm," she said, "I should like to rest in the summer-house."

Together we sat on the little bench and talked of many things. I inquired after Mr. Brown, Belinda, and the hens. She said her father was beginning to take notice, for yesterday they fetched him his small box of tools to look over. "I think," concluded Priscilla, "he has a new idea."

I waited a while longer, then rose hastily. "To think," I exclaimed, "I have forgotten to water my new plant! The poor thing will die from neglect if I do not attend to it at once. Will you please to excuse me, Priscilla?"

"Certainly," she replied, "but shall I not go with you?"

"No," I said, firmly, "you need to rest. Sit here until I return."

Then I hurried down the path to the foot-bridge. I scanned my field closely, and at the far end discovered Mr. Warren resting under the slippery-elm tree. Quickly I fastened my handkerchief to a pole, which I had fetched for this purpose, and waved it energetically.

A word to the wise! Mr. Warren understood. He arose with alacrity; and I, left to my own devices, wandered into the grove. It seemed as if I stayed for hours in that grove; I could not gauge the time it takes for some men to propose. I could only judge by Max. I well remembered how foolish and red he had looked and how

he stammered and what a time he took to it. Would Mr. Donald Warren stammer and get red in the face? I feared so, for he is a shy young man; but I did not care if he only told her that he loved her and in the end she said yes. Would she say yes? "Ah, Priscilla," I thought, "I have not read your heart in vain. If you yield to its soft persuasions, that little summer-house shall know the glory of a romance."

By and by the sunbeams began to steal down the boles of the silvery beech; they touched the white birch until its pallor was quite startling. All the ferns became golden ladders, and queer little nebulous figures darted over the brown carpet under the pine trees. It was growing late. Slowly I arose to

go home. When I reached the path that led to the summer-house, through the scarlet creepers I caught a glimpse of Priscilla's blue gown. So they were yet there, and perhaps all was well. I still carried the pole from which I had waved the white flag. A thought came to me. I took a folded paper from my chatelaine bag and tied it to the pole, letting it dangle a little. Then I stole to one side of the summer-house and pushed my offering through the doorway.

It was quickly seized and the two heads bent over the paper while Priscilla read:

"Beyond the gold green lawn the poppy garden
Flutters and flaunts like sunset seas aglow;
The frosty, fuzzy stalks and blue leaf banners,
Ranging in row on row.

"Oh, happy dreamers in a poppy garden,
Under the soft sweet sky of summer blue,
Oh, happy dreamers in a poppy garden,
Say, have your dreams come true?"

There was a shout of laughter, then Donald Warren rushed out to grasp my hands; and behind him came Priscilla, her great white fan swaying furiously and her sweet cheeks glowing like the pink of shells. I believe I shook hands with Mr. Warren at least six times, and I kissed Priscilla over and over again. We were all foolishly happy, with the happiness that ever and anon makes a paradise of this old world.

So Max found us and added his congratulations; and by and by Donald Warren rowed Priscilla across the lake. A daffodil sky flaunted in the west and the early



The early-rising moon made a path of glory for them

rising moon made a path of glory for them.

"Well, little matchmaker," said Max, "now I hope you are satisfied."



MR. BROWN IS DISSATISFIED XXVI

WHEN Mr. Brown learned that his daughter had given her heart away he resented it; but like the most of fathers, he was obliged to confess that his daughter's heart was her own and not at all amenable to the dictates of another. It took time to realize this, however.

Of course he might forbid her to marry; but who can forbid one to love? Love comes often when we least expect it, and without leave

or license breaks locks and bars and makes its way into the human heart.

Donald Warren very frankly stated his case to the old gentleman, but Mr. Brown said fretfully, "She is my very own; how can I spare her to another?"

"You will not lose her," returned the young man. "Your home shall always be with us; and, Mr. Brown, I will fit you up a workshop."

The workshop was interesting. Mr. Brown turned his face from the wall toward the young man. "What prospects have you?" he asked.

When Donald Warren had outlined his very good prospects, Mr. Brown relented; in truth, he became quite cordial, and it all ended

by his grasping the hand of his future son-in-law and blessing him in good old story-book fashion.

And here endeth the chapter.



XXVII

A DISAPPOINTMENT THAT PROVED A BLESSING

TO-DAY, two huge boxes arrived by express. As I gazed at them my heart bounded with gratitude. One surely contained the urn for my Boston fern, and the other, a much-needed wardrobe.

I could not wait for Max's return to open them. I called in Pat. Alas! alas! the first box contained — not the urn, but an onyx pedestal and a bronze bust of Byron. I could have wept. I did weep.

The second box; well, when my wardrobe was spread out, I really questioned my aunt's sanity. What frocks for a gardener! One is a pale blue gauze with a train at least a yard long, and all trimmed with lace and ribbon. When shall I wear it? One turn in the garden and it will be gone. Another is of pink mousseline de soie, accordion-pleated. Does my aunt think me a skirt-dancer? Another, of white Liberty silk, trimmed with rows and rows of pink rosebuds. It has low neck and short sleeves. I certainly can never hoe in this gown! The last one, a little plainer, thank Heaven! — a Paris muslin with a yoke and sleeves of finest lace. I can wear this upon great occasions; say, such as a wedding to come. At the bottom of the box

are silk and lace petticoats and white slippers. All this finery, when I did so long for a new gingham and a green muslin! When I so needed a new straw hat and a pair of garden gloves! Trusting in my aunt, I have spent all my allowance, — it is planted and sown, — but I have one welcome fact to console me. It will never come up and disappoint me like the freaks of my relative.

I was so happy when I arose this morning, but now — I went behind the Norway spruce and wept. I felt that I had cause to weep.

But good angels are ever near me. Presently, one seemed to come and touch me on the shoulder. It inquired: "Why these tears?"

I was about to explain when a great thought seized me; no doubt

it was an inspiration. Immediately, my grief was turned to joy.

Why should I consider the gowns an affliction? Aunt Matilda had imposed upon me no conditions. They were mine; I could give them away. How perfectly charming it would be to help out Priscilla Brown's trousseau! The gowns would be so becoming to her. She was slender, like myself; they would need but a little alteration, for fortunately, the skirts were not put into bands.

Then, there was the bronze bust of Byron and the onyx pedestal; what an appropriate wedding gift! Surely, I am hedged round by good angels! I blessed my aunt. I rose up from behind that Norway spruce and made for the morning-glories. When I feel particularly joyful I

always go and look at my morning-glories. They are the only flowers that seem just to express my exuberance.

That afternoon I purloined one of Rhoda's wash-tubs, and painted the outside with green enamel paint that dries so quickly; then Pat made me a fine pedestal out of a tree trunk. We nailed the tub to this pedestal and carefully filled it with good honest dirt. In it, I planted my Boston fern, — I mean Max's Boston fern, as it was my last year's Christmas gift to him. How it had grown! The fronds drooped gracefully and hid the plebeian tub. The effect was quite as good as if the fern had been placed in a costly urn, and I felt as well satisfied. I had lost nothing, after all; in truth, I was the

gainer; and this is an excellent way to look upon seeming disappointments.

A little later, a man came along selling a mixture to clean straw hats. I bought a bottle and Rhoda cleaned mine as good as new; then I examined my green muslin and found it would turn. I speculated that the grateful Misses Lark would do this turning at "reduced rates." Have I not said that if one has a little trust, sealed doors are always opening to him? There is always a way to compass one's desires.

After planting the fern, Pat and I repacked the boxes. I kept out the fine white muslin gown for myself. The others I sacrificed (?). Then I boldly marked those boxes with green paint, "For Miss Pris-

cilla Brown," being careful to erase my own address.

When Pat had nailed them up, he hoisted them into the wheelbarrow and pushed them to our little dock. Here he placed them (with the wheelbarrow on top) in the boat that my husband had recently purchased for the purpose of pursuing me. Then we entered the other boat, Pat rowing and I holding fast to a stout rope — towing our precious freight. In this fashion we passed the little river and rowed across the shining lake; landing at the path which led through the meadow to the Brown domain.

That night Priscilla Brown's trousseau was greatly enriched; and she had also received an appropriate wedding gift. I felt so

happy over this coup-de-main, that on the way home I silently prayed for my aunt's gout. Such a good woman ought never to have the gout. I can always pray best in the open air. Pat watched me with kindly Irish eyes. Finally he said:

"Shure, missus, ye're that generous!"

"Generous!" I broke in. "Is it generous to give away what you can't use and don't want?"



XXVIII

I POSSESS A SUN-DIAL

AUGUST is a still month. The meadows are very quiet, for the bobolinks have gone north, and so many of our birds are exchanging their shabby coats for new ones. This period of moulting seems to rob them of their melody, for they only sing now and then. But the very serenity of August makes it a month to be prized. Now, if ever, come golden days, when the lake is like a vast mirror, gathering into

its depths all the blueness of the hills, all the graciousness of the trees.

There is a row of burning sunflowers at the end of my garden. They were planted a little late, and seem just suited to these golden days; then my marigolds, row upon row, hobnobbing with the vegetables in the kitchen-garden, look beautiful in their crinkly orange gowns. Rhoda loves marigolds, and so does Araminta. The latter always has one stuck in her kinky braids. When Araminta is dressed in red she always reminds me of a black poppy flaunting in the sun.

August is the month of gorgeous flowers. How crimson the phlox glows yonder; and how deeply blue is my late sown larkspur. I have a huge foliage plant with all the

tints of the rainbow imprisoned in its leaves. It grows where the sun strikes it all day long and I give it but little water. Too much water fades foliage plants. Then the old-fashioned garden boasts of many a quaint sweet bloom in August.

Yesterday, my sun-dial came, ordered from the city. It is of gray stone and on its face is inscribed the motto: "I count only sunny hours." And this is what I wish to count in my life, the sunny hours, and not the sad and sorrowful ones.

We placed the sun-dial where I had planned, in the wide grassy space beside the old-fashioned garden. Pat had already planted the climbing red rose to decorate it. How I hope this honourable timepiece will soon grow a little mossy

and weather-stained! It will then seem at home in my garden. How sharp and distinct is the shadow cut by the sun on the cool gray stone; and how often I consult it! Never, before, has it seemed so important to me to note the fleeting hours.

Priscilla Brown has been over to see the sun-dial. Bending above it, we have reckoned the hours that must creep across its stone face, ere she will become the bride of Donald Warren. Oh, slow but happy hours! It is so sweet a thing to be betrothed! Life takes on such a radiance, such a strange new sense of fitness, that existence becomes no longer prose but poetry.

Priscilla Brown has made me a good deal of trouble over those gowns. She declares she cannot accept them; but I, oh, I have

begged her not to say it again. I have explained to her how I should pine in them. I could not go into the garden to water the plants. I could not run to watch the lily buds open; nor could I swish across the dewy grass at twilight. I could do nothing but sit like a sorrowful, transplanted shrub in hateful environments. "Dear Priscilla," I pleaded, "do accept them!" and when I had kissed her on both cheeks, the dear thing yielded.

I have noticed that the weeds do not grow so fast in August. It is as if they were discouraged with past months of striving. My garden is quite free from them; and as all the bugs are dead I have comparative peace.

Have I mentioned my red canna bed? It is as gorgeous as my tulip

bed in spring, and quite as heartening. It is so lasting in bloom that I know Jack Frost will only nip it after several trials. Cannas are new-fashioned, and I have set them far away from my grandmother's garden. They have no sweet old-timey fragrance. They are bold and flashy; but when the sun kisses them their brightness dazzles you and makes you think what a cheerful being God really is. With cannas, gladioli, marigolds, and sunflowers in your garden, can any one be sad?

I have a friend who declares the "blues" can be routed, by just thinking of roses, all kinds of roses, red, pink, yellow, and white; imagining them in the mind, till suddenly the sullen spirit withdraws and one feels glad again. If this

be true, how hilarious one might grow by just thinking of red cannas or golden marigolds.

It is the truest thing in the world that a love for flowers brings joy and peace where money fails. Would I exchange with my aunt: take her fortune and the gout and give her my love for flowers? No, indeed; that gout always decides me. I love my aunt, but I am so thankful that I have taken after my grandmother on my mother's side. I have been called a crank, a sentimentalist, and a mystic. They are all good names; for is not a crank needed to turn the wheels of progress? And a sentimentalist? Well, what would this world be if it were robbed of romance, that soft illusion which throws a glamour over common things? A mystic? He

sees more than other people; he peers through the material into the spiritual and beholds sights that convince him of the goodness of God for all time. The people who called me these names meant to malign me. It made me feel a little sorry, for I wondered what they had against me. I had never called them names. I am so glad that flowers are such mute comforters. I feel they love me and so do the trees, from the dainty white birch to her ragged sister that leans across the whimpering stream, all love me, because I first loved them.

If I could take you in my boat one of these still August days, I would row you past the reeds, turning a little golden, but still softly green; through the beds of yellow nuphar, those poor relations of the

water-lily; past the arrow-heads flaunting rank green leaves shaped like Indians' arrows; by the pebbly beach; past the grove and back again to the river. The water is like glass and the hills are burdened with a tender haze. Along the meadow fences the golden-rod is beginning to blaze, and a few asters star the grass. Yesterday, the minister and I met on the lake, he dreaming in his boat, and I in mine.

"I am afraid," he called out, "I cannot stay on the farm for two years."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because I have so much to tell. I am growing so enchanted with nature, so filled with the joy of it, that I must go back and let those poor iron-caged town people know there is hope, glorious hope, for

them! I wonder if I can keep in the pulpit and speak decorously. Who knows but that I may have to join the Salvation Army and get me a tambourine just to be rid of my exuberance! Is not this a perfect day!" and the minister took a full and sweeping view of the lake, the dear hills, and the sweet meadows.

"How is your garden these days?" I inquired.

"You mean the 'New Eden,'" he asserted. "The cabbages are poor: a green caterpillar is crawling over the leaves. I have caught one and imprisoned him in a tumbler just to see him cast off the old man — spin his chrysalis, or grave-clothes. My love-apples hang luscious on the vines, red and yellow. I have celery, squashes, and a great

golden pumpkin that I raised just for glory. My popcorn is turning yellow, and you can hear its silken tassels swinging in the breeze. My flowers! — oh, my dear lady, come yourself and look at them. When they hear your footsteps in the garden, they will prink and blush a deeper tint, for all Nature loves her lover."



XXIX

MAX AND I, AND THE SUMMER-HOUSE

THESE moonlight nights, Max and I walk in the garden. We sit in the little summer-house — just built for two — and often grow a trifle sentimental, even if we are quite "old married folk."

I am devoted to my husband, but I sometimes wish he were a gardener. I have thought how delightful it would be to spend all our income for plants. What a garden we should have! Yet of late, it has

been borne in upon me that perhaps it is just as well Max is an editor. Two of a trade never agree. He might wish a plant set in one spot and I wish it set in another. What would happen then? I cannot tell; and I dare not speculate. Now everything is pleasant between us. I never dispute where he shall place his paragraphs, or he where I shall set my sunflowers. Our tastes are totally different, but our hearts are united.

I think I should live longer if my conscience were not so troublesome. It has been vexing me for the past week, and all because I have not told Max about Aunt Matilda's latest gifts. Here sits the poor man, serene and comfortable. I hate to disturb him by letting him know that he has lost something

of value. Of course he will think me wildly foolish. How provoking is one's conscience!

Presently he remarks: "Judith, we ought to send Priscilla Brown and Donald Warren a wedding gift."

Surely one of my good angels prompted that speech, else why so apropos? "I have attended to that, Max," I replied; "they have a suitable gift."

"What was it?" he asked. "A palm, or a fern, or maybe a rose-bush?"

"It was nothing of the sort," I said stoutly. Then I told him all.

I expected he would be so vexed, but he only laughed. "You are a little saint, Judith," he said. "How did you guess that I am short of money? It certainly was an appro-

priate gift; but why did you part with the gowns? You know I love to see you look pretty."

"I should not look pretty long," I replied, "if I were obliged to wear such frocks. My forehead would get tangled into a frown and my spirits leave me. It is useless, Max, to expect a garden woman to be arrayed in tissues. My aunt is really ridiculous. She ought to know better."

"Tut, tut," he said.

"The Misses Lark are coming to turn my green muslin," I remarked a little later; "so I shall do quite well. I like green; it's God's favourite colour. He has arrayed more objects in green than in anything else. Somehow I feel so woodsy in such a frock; so in tune with nature; then I consider green

is becoming to my style of beauty, don't you?"

Max smiled and slipped my hand into his. "You're a cheerful soul," he said; "and you do remind me of a prinky-perky little shrub."

Was that a compliment?

How fragrant white flowers are at night. My white phlox and the branching nicotiana really usurp the air. Their perfume is as insistent as a voice calling one; and did you ever pass an elderberry bush after dark; catch the faint glimmering of the white cymes and smell the sweet musky odour that one scarcely heeds in daylight? Then the white lilies gleaming in the moonlight. Did you ever stand among tall clusters of them,—yourself arrayed in white, and feel, as you inhaled their exquisite fra-

grance, your soul grow? White lilies are of the spirit, and when the moonlight shines upon them, they touch the great invisible rim of the occult. I like to pray among the lilies. I like to ask God for a full measure of happiness, well pressed down. I don't know why I should think God was more in the lily patch than anywhere else, but I do feel His wonderful presence there; and when I smell the lilies, — why, I hear the rustling of wings.

My friend, who declares she has a home in a spiritual sphere, enters her domain between tall hedges of wonderful lilies. I often think of that home as she described it. How real it seems to her! I suppose if a doctor were to diagnose her case, he would declare her fit for a lunatic asylum; but, if one must be

crazy, why not be crazy over something pleasant? and my friend is a very joyful lunatic.

"Look not into the unseen," warn some; but I say, gaze deeply; for the material is but the shadow of the unseen.



I SURPRISE MR. SPEAR

XXX

THE Misses Lark have come, two prim but sprightly old maids. Their thin locks are dragged back from their foreheads with painful tightness and made into firm little buttons, one at the back of each head. Their eyes are gray and full of curiosity; but it is such sweet and kindly curiosity that it makes me love them. This time they wear stiffly starched light calico gowns and small hoops. Think of it, these

disciples of fashion in hoops! I had to inquire why they wore them. They replied, "Because hoops are so airy and comfortable."

The dear things have brought me a new shrub called Peter's Wreath and I have planted it beside the ice-house. They say it has an abundance of spiry blooms, handsome enough to make a wreath for St. Peter, himself. When I expressed my joyful thanks to them, they replied that it was but a slight return for the beautiful cat I had given them.

When I look at a lonely little nest in my maple tree and recall the wails of the poor robins, I feel that that cat is misrepresented.

With many a little chipper and chirp the Larks began to turn my green gown. They say it will look

as good as new. Dear, simple souls, they are used to poverty and makeshifts. It is not often they get a new gown to work on, for the most of their neighbours turn their gowns upside down and inside out before they discard them. These are the dear dressmakers that I once prayed the Lord to send me. Now, if my milliner were only as handy to furbish old hats, why, I could save enough money to set out a lily patch for Mrs. Sullivan. I know her mother, the old lady in the ruffled cap who makes me think of a sunflower, would enjoy watching the lilies come out. The naughty old thing smokes and is quite material in her remarks about people; but I forgive her, because she learned these wretched habits in her youth and no one has taught

her differently. She cannot live much longer, and it is high time that she had a lily patch to spiritualize her. Mrs. Sullivan declares that her mother has "an illigant moind," but I consider it a bit too worldly for one of her age.

Yesterday, Pat and I buried the rose sprouts for Mrs. Sullivan's hedge. I do not think it seemly that the corn-field should peep into her very windows. Still, there is something wonderfully enticing about a corn-field. Did you ever walk in one, down its long green aisles, and hear the rustling and shaking of silken tassels in the breeze? Then the pumpkin vines straying through it, with great, green leaves and coarse yellow flowers, gaudy heralds of the golden globes of autumn.

When I was a child I had a mania for fashioning pumpkin lanterns. I know I excelled in cutting out Satanic faces; for once, when I had made three lanterns (all excellent likenesses of Beelzebub), I set them, just at dusk, outside our gate. A horse passing recognized these portrayals of evil and ran away. A fine carriage was broken and my father was obliged to pay fifty dollars to the indignant owner. After that I made angels' faces and kept them away from the gate.

If one enjoys walking through corn when green and odorous, is it not still finer to walk through it at autumn time; say, when it has turned a tawny yellow and stiff breezes frolic down its aisles? Then such a clatter as the leaves make. You pull the pallid husks to peep

at the golden kernels; and, if it only be popcorn, what anticipations of winter fun with a corn popper and the bright hickory log.

Some people say autumn is a melancholy time of year, but I say, "Away with such a thought!" Are the tints that burn and glitter — the riotous reds and yellows, sad tones? Autumn is gay, the glorious fulfilment of a wonderful promise.

I must always have my hat trimmed with red in autumn. At the turning of the first green leaf, I feel it is time to deck myself. I like to wear a red skirt, and if I dared, a yellow waist. I dare not; so I wear a green waist, the colour of young beech leaves. Then I go out and mingle with all the glorious tints; myself a bit of gayety in

spirit and in person. I revel in being happy and never wish to be miserable as long as there are gardens and the sun shines.

Yesterday a funny thing happened to me. I started out for golden-rod. Although I have plenty of yellow flowers at home, I still covet these golden candles that flare in every fence corner. I wanted such a quantity of golden-rod that I carried a large basket for myself and took Araminta along to carry a smaller one. She was in one part of the field and I in another. I was finding some particularly fine candles, when I suddenly heard voices from behind a group of elder-bushes.

One I recognized as that of farmer Spear. "Yes, siree," said he, "I'm done cuttin' down shrubs.

I'm jes' goin' to let bushes grow all round my fields. I never expected a gol-dum woman could larn me anything; but one did. She told me bugs jes' naturally take to open spaces."

I was bending low for a bunch of golden-rod, and by peering through the bushes I could see the men, two middle-aged farmers in ragged straw hats and overalls, each chewing a spray of timothy.

I could not resist the mischief; I thrust my head a little closer into the bushes and said sternly:

"I'm not a gol-dum woman!"

They started and looked in every direction; but I hid the closer under the elderberry bushes. I could see the red mounting to farmer Spear's copper-coloured face. Poor man, he was dreadfully mortified.

I felt so sorry for him, that I gave way to a merry laugh, and, emerging from my hiding-place, confronted them.

"Pitchforks and hoe handles!" exclaimed the other man; but farmer Spear came forward. "I jes' humbly beg yer pardon, Mrs. Elliot," he said. "I didn't guess you wor round here."

"Or you wouldn't have called me a name?" I said.

"I rather think not," he replied. "I didn't mean nothin', anyhow. It's jes' my nateral way o' talkin'. Me and my folks think a lot of you."

"I'm not offended," I said, "and you will never regret letting the beautiful shrubs grow."

I know the poor man went home and told his wife; for that very

afternoon Mrs. Spear appeared with a peace offering, a clump of tiger lilies. I was so glad to get these lilies that I forgot I had been called a name. In return I heaped her basket with blooms, and told her not to worry; the peace offering had wiped out all grudges.

As soon as she was gone, we planted it, the peace offering, in my field. Pat dug the holes and I divided the bulbs. Next year I shall have three clumps of tiger lilies blooming along the brook. I have planted them just beyond the dark blue iris, so that their orange tints will show to the best advantage, should they happen to bloom together. The banks of that brook shall yet delight the heart of even an anchorite. Oh, how thankful I feel to the bull, that, grazing irrev-

erently in yonder lane, lived not in vain. I know this minute, you wish you had such a field. Don't you envy me my white-lilac hedge and the old slippery-elm tree, the purple in yonder corner and all the riot of red colour? How I wish you had just such a field, dear heart, whoever you are.

I do so admire joe-pye weed. Pat and I have planted some of it quite near the daffodils. They do not flower together; but could they, I fancy such crimson and gold would make a splendid harmony.

Yesterday I was tying up my zinnias, for the wind had draggled them. They are such honest, late bloomers, looking like humble folk in gay attire, that I love them. I was tying them up very tenderly when a visitor wandered into my

garden. She lives in New York, and to her the whole world circles round Central Park. I agreed with her that Central Park is beautiful; "but," said I, "the policemen own it. One dare not so much as touch a leaf for fear of those guardians of the law. And they are so fierce, so big and aggressive. No, Central Park does not belong to God, it belongs to the policemen."

She said she had never noticed it.

"Perhaps that is because you never have an insane desire to pick flowers," I remarked. "Once, when I was there, I saw a poor woman in a shabby gown stoop down, when she thought no one saw her, and break off a slip from a beautiful plant. Her soul longed for flowers.

"From behind a tree came a

hoarse command; and a moment later, I beheld the poor soul escorted, I suppose, to prison, by a capable, keen-sighted guardian of the law.

"You are welcome to Central Park," I concluded. "I prefer a garden of my own, and a field that has no placard, KEEP OFF THE GRASS; I like to go forth empty-handed and to return flower-laden, challenged by none."

"You do look happy," she said, a little wistfully.

"I am just what I look," I replied; "and it is all because I love nature and fresh air."

I feel sorry for that city woman, just as I feel sorry for my Aunt Matilda. They seem to have so much, yet in reality have so little. A good summer in a garden, hoeing

and digging, would tone up their livers and make new creatures of them. Still I cannot compel them to look into nature; so, I fear they will never know what they have lost; how joyful they might be on this earth; how little need they have for Heaven. Of course I wish and I expect to go to Heaven, but it is because I know I must make a change. If I had my way I should not die at all: I should keep right on cultivating gardens and enjoying myself. After I had lived in one garden a hundred years or so, I would make another and then another. Who knows but in time I could transform the whole earth into one vast garden. Then would men be brothers; for there is nothing like an interchange of flower seeds to promote amicability.

GOOD ADVICE IN REGARD TO COOKS

XXXI

I SHOULD feel quite sorry to see August slip by, if I did not know that September is to be such a pleasant month. Pleasant to me, for I expect to plant my little friend's lily patch. How I hope Mr. Gerome will sort every one of those lily bulbs himself. That florist pretends to admire me, and he certainly ought to do well by me. Then Priscilla Brown is to be married the last of September. Donald Warren will come a few

days ahead of time, visit me, and make all his arrangements for moving the Brown family.

I have felt a lively anxiety as to the welfare of the hens, but that is over, for the whole flock is to be sold to the poorhouse. Soon the paupers can enjoy freshly laid eggs. I feel sorry for the hens. I expect some of them will get the pip and die. The poorhouse food may not agree with them; it will chill them, like cold charity. However, I shall send the matron all my sunflower seeds, that she may bestow upon them, now and then, a little cheerful food. At first I thought I should have to take the whole flock myself; but what could I do with ninety hens and forty roosters? In less than a year I should not have a flower on the place. If I owned

them I should grow to love them (it is a weakness of mine to love everything I own), therefore I could not kill them. So, if there were ninety hens this year there might be one hundred and eighty hens next year and eighty roosters; and the next year? — oh, I dared not compute it! I told Belinda I really could not buy them; and it was a comfort to me when I learned they were going to the poorhouse.

I think Belinda is glad to leave the farm. She says that now she will enjoy herself, doing good cooking. I think Belinda and Rhoda are the only beings I ever met that so dote on good cooking.

What a treasure Donald Warren will have; and he really thought to leave Belinda behind. It is well he has a good practical friend like my-

self to advise him. If he had left this real jewel behind he might have been deceived by a paste jewel, one who enjoys doing bad cooking. A paste jewel, of this sort, can cast a blur over the most ideal life in the world; she can make dingy a whole household's happiness; she can, by bad cooking, bring down upon the unlucky family a series of diseases that God never intended them to have.

When Donald Warren arrived I charged him anew, with great seriousness, to watch over Belinda; to cherish her as the apple of his eye; to give her a good tonic every spring. "You may be able to get another wife," I said, "but it is only once in a lifetime you can secure a good cook. Be kind to Belinda and thereby you will escape dys-

pepsia, neuralgia, and all that sort of thing. She enjoys doing good cooking; with such a culinary artist in the home, there will be joy, peace and happiness, yea, and long life."

After I had delivered this sermon I went to the kitchen, for Rhoda was calling me. "Honey, don' yo' want to taste mah peach butter?" she asked, proudly displaying the tempting result of her labors.

I tasted it, then I spread an ample supply of it on two slices of bread. These I placed on a dainty china plate and carried them to Donald Warren. "By their fruits ye shall know them," I said. "Here, take one slice and I will eat the other. Oh, how I thank God for a good cook!"

When there was not a crumb left,

we entered our boat and rowed across the lake to the Browns'.

I told Donald I would entertain Mr. Brown while he made a little love to Priscilla, and I kept my word. Mr. Brown was propped up in a big chair. He looked very waxen and worn. As I gazed at him, I thought how essential it was that he should keep to earth and never again attempt to fly.

He asked me in a trembling voice if I really thought Donald Warren would make Priscilla happy.

When I assured him that he had nothing to fear from that plant-loving young man, he sighed and said, "She is so like her mother! I dreamed last night of Priscilla's mother."

"Did you?" I said gently.

"Yes, and she appeared to me

looking young and lovely. They never grow old in Paradise. She smiled — the same tender, flower-like smile of old — and she wore the rich silvery brocade, with its garlands of pink roses, that I used so to admire. Is it not strange that the dead are so real in our dreams?

"She asked me about Priscilla and I told her that while I had not done well in life, I had always loved our child. 'Now,' I said, 'I must give Priscilla to another.'

"She made no reply, only smiled and tossed me the fresh pink rose that had slept on her bosom."

The poor old man closed his eyes and the tears slipped down his pallid cheeks. He had loved and lost. Did I say lost? I did not mean it; for who can lose Love? It is the foundation of the universe.

"I think," he said presently, "that I am a little jealous of my daughter. How can I give her to this stalwart youth, when I want her for *mine* alone?"

"Mr. Brown," I remarked, "there are always two ways of looking at things: there is the dark side and the bright side. I believe if you will turn your fears over, you will find they are like clouds, and have a silver lining. In a few days you will not only have one child, but two. Think of it, a girl and a boy, the latter well-grown, with all his wild oats sown. You have escaped his bringing up, which means much, and you have him at his best. I consider that you are very fortunate."

I smiled and Mr. Brown smiled also; but the tears were still slip-

ping down his cheeks. I esteemed it a most propitious time to turn the conversation to inventions. I asked him about his patent ear-trumpet.

He brightened at once and wanted to know if I were deaf.

I told him no; but it was always well to have an understanding of things, in case such a calamity should overtake me.

Then Mr. Brown launched out. He talked for two straight hours upon the merits of that ear-trumpet. His eyes sparkled and he became quite his old self. I listened with all the fortitude I could summon, for it occurred to me that a woman who was so fond of extolling plants and gardens ought to have a little leniency in her nature; still, I confess, I could have shed

tears of joy, when, at last, I beheld Priscilla Brown and Donald Warren sauntering toward the house.

I immediately called to Donald that I had not watered my big Boston fern. "It will be so dry, so very dry!" I exclaimed. "Oh, we must hasten home." Then I bade Mr. Brown good-bye. I told him I would come again, and hear more about that delightful ear-trumpet. In the meantime he must keep up his spirits and be sure to look upon the bright side of things.

As we rowed across the lake, I could but recall Josh Billings's definition of a bore, "The man who talks about himself, just when you want to talk about yourself." I realized how easily I might have spent those two hours in a dissertation upon flower seeds alone. I

need not have touched upon a single plant. Was I any better than Mr. Brown, whose hobby, for the time being, was ear-trumpets? I feared not.

Presently Donald Warren disturbed these reflections by beginning a dissertation upon the merits of his beloved Priscilla. How long could he keep on, I wondered, expressing his admiration for her? I dared not reckon. However, I was interested in learning just how much he loved her and how like Heaven her life with him was to be. Always would he bow to her will; never, for a moment, should she be absent from his thoughts.

I listened silently until we reached home and I saw Max's cigar shining like a firefly through the green shrubbery.

"Here, Max," I called, "is a lovelorn lunatic. Take him and teach him the ways of this mundane sphere. The poor creature fancies this earth is Heaven."



THEIR WEDDING DAY XXXII

THE day of the wedding dawned fair and cloudless. It was just such a day as I desired. Of course, I should not have objected to a cloud or so in the sky, had they been the right sort of clouds, great drifts of snow hugging the horizon and intensifying the blue.

At an early hour I heard Donald Warren arise; and a little later I peeped from my window to see him pacing the garden walks, his face

as beaming as the rising sun. I no longer felt sleepy; so, quickly dressing, I joined him.

He asked at once, "Do you think there was ever another such day as this?"

"No," I told him, "unless it was my own wedding day; which was a rare and delightful day, red-lettered in the calendar. You need not think you are the only person who has had a monopoly of happiness," I concluded.

"Truly, you and Max have gotten on well," he remarked.

"Have you ever seen," I interrupted severely, "a woman more devoted to a garden — I mean to a husband — than I am to mine?"

"Where is he now?" he asked.

"Asleep, of course. It is a sure sign of devotion, when a woman

lets her husband sleep in the morning."

He laughed. "He ought to be up adoring you," he cried. "Next to Priscilla Brown, you are the dearest woman in the world."

I thanked him.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Up to that graveyard on the hillside," I replied. "There is a little spot of earth there that I am keeping green for remembrance's sake; I wish to water some of the plants and flowers I have placed upon it."

"I will go with you," he said.

We found a big watering-pot and set out, walking through the dewy field where the spiders had already spread their shining webs. "It is to be a fine day," I said, pointing

downward; "for behold Argiope's snare. Is it not strange that birds and insects are better weather prophets than man?"

The sun was shining when we opened the graveyard gate, falling in serene golden rays upon the sunken mounds. I watered my plants, which were already growing gayly above the lately disturbed earth. How kind is Nature to so quickly hide these bruised spots! Donald Warren kept close beside me.

"The one whose body rests here," I said at last, "lost the fulfilment of love in this life. He never realized its entire sweetness or its sometime bitterness. The one he loved went away in all her youth and glory, while he remained behind; until, like a last wind-

blown leaf, he succumbed to nature, falling asleep in the arms of Death. He said once that he was glad she went away, this little sweetheart, because, now, he could meet her again with their love untarnished; not spoiled by petty misunderstandings or hurt by harsh words. All his life he had kept the thought of her in his heart; and from that thought sprang the sweetest, noblest character I have ever known. He was always happy, my dear old friend! He believed in the goodness and happiness of this earth, and in the goodness and happiness of the world to come. He would counsel you to-day not to wed Priscilla Brown for this life only, but for the life to come. He would bid you to be happy here that you may be still happier over there. He

would tell you always, to behold Priscilla's virtues, and never her faults."

"She has no faults," proclaimed Donald Warren, stoutly.

"I agree with you," I said. "She is the sweetest, dearest girl I ever knew; and you are the most agreeable, plant-loving young man of my acquaintance. I have great hopes for your happiness."

The wedding was to take place at high noon; and at exactly eleven o'clock, Pat had the boat neatly carpeted and the seats upholstered in fresh cushions. From the house emerged the garden lady, arrayed in a fine white Paris muslin with a large train. Behind her walked a train-bearer, Araminta Sprangleberry, gay in a red crape frock with red footgear to match. Rhoda had

brushed out her pigtails until the piquant little face was surrounded with a soft cloud of kinky blackness. Araminta looked like some strange tropical blossom, or, as I thought later, like one of our American products, a piece of rookwood. She tossed her head in a lofty manner and bore my train as if I were the one lady in the land. I took my seat in the stern of the boat, and Max handed me my precious bouquet of pink tea roses. Araminta squeezed in beside me. Donald Warren and Max occupied the middle seat and Pat was at the oars. Rhoda watched us depart, her white teeth gleaming in a delighted smile of genuine good-will.

We rowed down our little river and across the shining lake. Halfway, we overtook the Rev. Mr. Sim-

mons, he rowing, and Mrs. Simmons seated opposite to him, arrayed in a sweet lavender silk. Mr. Simmons had the important duty of performing the marriage ceremony; but this did not preclude him from unfolding to me that he had sent to Japan — to a missionary he knew — for flower seeds. When they came he would divide with me. What a charming and generous man he is! And how well it is, after all, to send missionaries abroad. They have every opportunity to study the flora of a country; and when it comes to an exchange of flower seeds, why, they are simply invaluable. I determined then and there to send Mr. Simmons, the very next day, some roots of my double yellow hollyhocks. I had noticed how much he

needed them against his dull brick wall.

When we reached the landing, we walked through the fields, a most inspiring procession, Mr. Simmons naturally leading the flock; I following with my train-bearer; Mrs. Simmons lingering to have a few words with Max; while Donald Warren, well, he walked on air.

We reached the Brown domain and found Belinda, arrayed in a purple frock with a yellow silk sash around her waist, waiting to welcome us. I had persuaded her to make the button at the back of her head a trifle larger; and to prove my interest had presented her with a nice hair switch. She looked, if not handsome, very gorgeous.

Mr. Brown was propped up in his big chair. He appeared quite

cheerful. And the bride? There are brides the world over, yet none ever looked fairer than Priscilla Brown. When my eyes rested upon her I thought of white flowers; but none that I recalled quite suited me in point of resemblance, so I said: "I will choose a gem, a Ceylon pearl." No wonder Donald Warren vowed her a life of devotion.

Soon it was all over, and I had kissed the bride, forcing back my tears. We had eaten Belinda's excellent wedding breakfast, and now Mr. Brown was growing agitated. Max helped him into a light overcoat and handed him his rusty silk hat. With the aid of a newly made son and a crutch, he hobbled to the carriage, and was gently lifted in; then followed Priscilla, dressed in deep blue, with pink roses in her

hat. It was a modern costume, but it became her no better than the quaint old gowns belonging to mamma of histrionic fame. She took the vacant place beside her father and the bridegroom sat opposite. It seemed a little cruel that Donald Warren could not sit beside his bride; but, I reflected, "He can gaze into her eyes, and that will suffice."

At last came Belinda, very red in the face from over-exertion. She wore her black silk "mantilly" and a bonnet that would shame a flower garden. She carried numerous bandboxes and bundles and climbed up beside the driver. Belinda has no modern notions as to the rights of cooks. I was the last one she looked upon. As she said farewell, she bade me see that the man who

was to come after the fowls should not overlook a black-and-white hen that had stolen her nest. "She has lost some of her tail feathers," shouted poor Belinda, as the carriage rolled away; "and I think she has a topknot. I don't know wherever she's hid her nest, 'thout 'tis in the south medder. She was allus makin' for that medder-lot."

I called back to her not to worry; I would hunt the hen, and I shall. It will be such fun poking around the meadow, peering under the golden-rod, and lifting the wild-grape vines, searching for a black-and-white truant, with lost tail feathers and a topknot. Maybe the unlucky fowl realizes that she is bound for the poorhouse (unpleasant prospect), and has hidden herself away. Still, she must be found.

If left out, she might starve or the foxes eat her.

I sigh a little as I gaze at the empty house; empty, for all save Mrs. Sullivan, who upon this festive occasion has volunteered to "rid up things." She will stay until night, then lock fast and strong and bring the keys to me.

It is all over, the dear little romance in which I played so creditable a part. But for me there would have been no wedding; and but for the violets. To be sure, these plants cost something; then they refused to bloom, and the tending of them gave poor Belinda the lumbago. Some people would have sighed and said, "What a failure!" To such, life is always a failure, but I waited and hoped and prayed; I helped things along judiciously, for

one cannot go too fast at match-making; and lo, the result. Even that kind old uncle out in California contributed his share to the general happiness. To be sure, he died to do it; but then he was ninety, and no doubt well prepared for another world. It looks as if it were all predestined; and *I* made the instrument to bring it about. As there was no one else to praise me, I said to myself: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!"

Silently, and a little sadly, we walked down the path to the lake. I watched Mr. and Mrs. Simmons embark; and in parting said truthfully that I hoped nothing would happen to that missionary before he sent us the flower seeds. There are so many uprisings in foreign countries that one never feels safe.

Then I turned to my train-bearer, "Araminta," I said, "you may walk home; but if you get a spot on your red shoes you need not expect to attend another wedding." I dismissed Pat; for oh, I so wanted to be alone with Max. He is such a comforter.

We rowed out on the quiet lake. What a serene and joyful afternoon; not a cloud in the sky, and over yonder in the fields the indefatigable little song sparrows singing as merrily as if it were April. I love a song sparrow, because he is so chipper and hard to discourage.

Presently my husband let the boat drift. He looked at me and inquired a trifle quizzically: "What's the matter, Mistress Greenslip?"

I dipped one hand in the water and let the shining drops run to sink into the blue again. "Nothing," I said bravely; "I was only thinking how I shall miss Priscilla; but Donald Warren has promised that they shall all return next summer."

When we reached our landing Max helped me out, then caught me to his heart.

"You're not going to pine, little Judith?" he said.

"Pine!" I exclaimed, "with the garden and you left to comfort me. What more could one ask?"

"Nothing more," replied Max.

THE END.

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